POEMS

NATIONAL AND NON-ORIENTAL

[*WITH SOME NEW PIECES*]

Selected from the Works

OF

SIR EDWIN ARNOLD, M.A., K.C.I.E., C.S.I.

AUTHOR OF "THE LIGHT OF ASIA,"

ETC. ETC. ETC.

LONDON

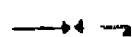
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PREFACE.



As it has been sometimes thought and said,—inaccurately,—that the Author is exclusively devoted to oriental subjects of verse, and as he may yet recur to those, he has here complied with the desire that a selection should be made from his non-oriental poems.

London, *May* 1888

CONTENTS.

CONTENTS.

The Four Crowns.

Written upon the death of the Prince Consort.]

THRONED before the people
  Queen of land and sea,
While from tower and steeple
  Crashed the clangorous glee;
First of four—enamelled
  All with kingdoms round—
The crown of this our England
  Upon thy brow was bound.

Next, in happiest hours,
  Came the crown of life;
Love's fair wreath of flowers
  Diademed thee Wife:
Hailed, Princess and Woman,
  Honoured, Queen and Spouse,

Half the golden burden
Lightened on thy brows.

Yet a crown came after,
Waiting thee to wear;
Little children's laughter
Rippled in thine ear.
At thy knee, most Noble!
Learning how to reign,
Princes and princesses
Grew—a gracious train.

Then, that coronation,
Grander than of Queen,
Making highest station
Higher than had been,
Did betide thee! binding
On thy drooping brow
Sorrow's thorny circlet,
Death hath crowned thee now.

O our Queen! our Mother!
Thou, of all, know'st all;

Joy or sorrow—other
  Cannot hence befall.
Sad, imperial Forehead!
  Sceptred, weary Hand
Widowed Heart! the Greatest
  And Loneliest in the Land!

1862.

To H.R.H. the Princess of Wales

ON HER FIRST ARRIVAL IN ENGLAND.

FIERCE, brown-bearded, unclad in the spoils of wolf
and of wild-cat,
Keener in ravin than wolves, than wild-cats wilder
in onset,
Came, in the days gone by, the Danes to the shore
of the Angles,
Came on an errand of blood—to beleaguer, to burn,
and to ravage,
Ploughing up furrows of foam on the grass-green
meads of the North Sea
Steered the old Vikings their course, one hand on
the helm of their galley,
One on the helves of their axes: and when from Flam-
borough's foreland
Shading his eyes from the glimmer of sunrise, the
watcher beheld them

Holding right on for the coast, with the signs and
the standards of battle,
Loud through the wolds rang the cry, "The Dane!
the Dane cometh hither!"
Flickered with warning flames the crests of the hills,
and the cressets,
Mothers and maidens fled inland—fast gathered the
bowmen and billmen.
Grim the welcome awaiting those strangers!—such
greeting as arrows
Carry on wings of wrath, such kisses as edge of
sword renders;—
All their room in the land as much as the length of
their lances,
Nay, or beneath its turf, the length of the Chieftains
who bore them.

Fair, golden-haired, and glad with the joy of her
youth and her beauty,
Daughter herself of a Prince, of a Prince the loved
and the chosen,
Comes in these happier days the Dane to the shores
of the Angles,

Comes on an errand of love, to the music of soft
hymenæals.
Over the silver-green seas, which kiss the keel of
her vessel,
Bending their foreheads on this side and that to the
Maiden of Norseland
(Rightfully Lady of Waves by her Father's right
and her Husband's),
Speeds the sweet Princess to land; and all the voices
of gladness
Tell that she is arrived whose hand the Prince of the
English
Takes in the sight of God and man for the hand of
his consort—
Consort in splendours and cares, in the gloom and the
glitter of ruling.
Warm the welcome awaiting this lovely and winning
invader!
Such as men give with the lips when the heart has
gone forward before them;
Such as a nation of freemen, not apt to flatter for
fashion,
Make, when the innocent past is a pledge of the
happy to-morrows.

Princess! weak is one voice in the throng and
clamour of voices,
Poor one flower in the rain of the roses that shower
at thy footsteps,
Faint one prayer in the anthem of litanies uttered
to bless thee;
Yet to thy young fair face I make an Englishman's
greeting,
On thy path to the altar I lay this wreath from a
singer,
I—of the men whose fathers encountered thy fathers
with battle,
I—of the men whose mothers turned pale at the
galleys of Denmark,
Heralds of happiness now, sea-birds that bring from
the Norland
Unto our Prince his Bride—and to England omens
of gladness.

The First Distribution of the Victoria Cross.

—⟷—

To-day the people gather from the streets,
  To-day the soldiers muster near and far;
Peace, with a glad look and a grateful, meets
  Her rugged brother, War.

To-day the Queen of all the English land,
  She who sits high o'er Kaisers and o'er Kings,
Gives with her royal hand—th' Imperial hand
  Whose grasp the earth en-rings—

Her Cross of Valour to her worthiest;—
  No golden toy with milky pearls besprent,
But simple bronze, and for a warrior's breast
  A fair, fit ornament.

And richer than red gold that dull bronze seems,
  Since it was bought with lavish waste of worth

Whereto the wealth of Earth's gold-sanded streams
Were but a lack, and dearth.

Muscovite metal makes this English Cross,
Won in a rain of blood and wreath of flame;
The guns that thundered for their brave lives' loss
Are worn hence, for their fame!

Aye, listen! all ye maidens laughing-eyed,
And all ye English mothers, be aware!
Those who shall pass before ye at noontide
Your friends and champions are.

The men of all the army and the fleet,
The very bravest of the very brave,
Linesman and Lord—these fought with equal feet
Firm-planted on their grave.

The men who, setting light their blood and breath
So they might win a victor's haught renown,
Held their steel straight against the face of Death,
And frowned his frowning down.

And some that grasped the bomb, all fury-fraught,
And hurled it far, to spend its spite away,—
Between the rescue and the risk, no thought,—
Shall pass our Queen this day;

And some who climbed the deadly glacis side,
For all that steel could stay, or savage shell;
And some, whose blood upon the Colours dried
Tells if they bore them well;

Some, too, who, gentle-hearted even in strife,
Seeing their fellow or their friend go down,
Saved his, at peril of their own dear life,
Winning the Civic Crown.

Well done for them; and, fair Isle, well for thee!
While that thy bosom beareth sons like those
"*The little gem set in the silver sea*"
Shall never fear her foes!

In Memoriam.

[On the death of Lord Raglan.]

AH! not because our Soldier died before his field
was won;
Ah! not because life would not last till life's long
task were done,
Wreathe one less leaf, grieve with less grief;—of all
our hosts who led
Not least in work and worth approved,—Lord Raglan
lieth dead.

His nobleness he had of none, War's Master taught
him war,
And prouder praise that Master gave than meaner
lips can mar;
Gone to his grave, his duty done; if farther any seek,
He left his life to answer them,—a soldier's,—let it
speak!

'Twas his to wield a blunted sword,—to fight a fated field,
While idle tongues talked victory, to struggle not to yield;
Light task for placeman's ready pen to plan a day for fight,
Hard work and hot with steel and shot to win that day aright.

Tears have been shed for the brave dead; mourn him who mourned for all!
Praise hath been given for strife well striven, praise him who strove o'er all,
Nor count that conquest little, though no banner flaunt it far,
That under him our English hearts with Frost and Plague waged war.

And if he held those English hearts too good to pave the path
To idle victories, shall we grudge what noble palm he hath?

Like ancient Chief he fought a-front, and 'mid his
soldiers seen,
His work was aye as stern as theirs; oh! make his
grave as green.

They know him well,—the Dead who died that
Russian wrong should cease;
Where Fortune doth not measure men,—their souls
and his have peace;
Aye! as well spent in sad sick tent as they in bloody
strife,
For English Homes our English Chief gave what he
had,—his life.

1853.

Florence Nightingale.

IF on this verse of mine
Those eyes shall ever shine,
Whereto sore-wounded men have looked for life,
Think not that for a rhyme,
Nor yet to fit the time,
I name thy name,—true Victress in this strife!
But let it serve to say
That, when we kneel to pray,
Prayers rise for thee thine ear shall never know;
And that thy gallant deed,
For God, and for our need,
Is in all hearts, as deep as love can go.

'Tis good that thy name springs
From two of Earth's fair things—
A stately city and a soft-voiced bird;

'Tis well that in all homes,
When thy sweet story comes,
And brave eyes fill—that pleasant sounds be heard.
Oh voice! in night of fear,
As night's bird, soft to hear,
Oh great heart! raised like city on a hill;
Oh watcher! worn and pale,
Good Florence Nightingale,
Thanks, loving thanks, for thy large work and will!
England is glad of thee—
Christ, for thy charity,
Take thee to joy when hand and heart are still!

1854.

Congratulatory Address.

[Recited in the Sheldonian Theatre at Oxford, on the Installation of the Earl of Derby as Chancellor of the University.]



THRICE welcome to the seat thy worth hath won!
Proud in her grief sad Isis hails her son;
Welcome! but question not the tear that starts
From the sealed sorrow of a thousand hearts.
Welcome! but ask not why in Sheldon's hall
The voice must falter, and the greeting fall;
Greeting as warm, and joy as deep and proud,
As though that greeting and that joy were loud,
And faith as firm, and love as true we bear,
Though Past and Present mingle smile and tear.
We weave two wreaths, we twine two garlands now;
One of bright olive for thine honoured brow,
And one of cypress for the mighty dust,
Who is our memory, as Thou our trust:

And therefore mourn we, therefore we rejoice,
Shaping glad welcomes with a chastened voice,
Because to-day great Arthur's seat we see
Vacant of him,—held worthily of thee.

Sad and remindful task it were to say
What hope and gladness graced the festal day,
When, diademed with victory's brightest bays,
As knight that entereth after herald's praise,
Hither he came; whose fame had come before
From Spain's sierras, and the Belgic shore;
When Learning's self, forgetting doubt and dread,
Unclasped the helmet from her warrior's head,
Ungirt the good steel sword his thigh displayed,
And wiped the bloody honour from its blade:
Nor held unfitting, nor unworthy thought
That gentle work her timid fingers wrought,
For holiest is the war that winneth peace,
And best the strife that biddeth striving cease.
And now, (alas, but for our hopes in thee
Too dark and mindful were such memory!)
The sword that stayed not till the fight was won,
The heart that failed not till the right was done;

Firm heart and faithful sword, their work is o'er
And the great Captain resteth evermore.

But Peace hath victories of deed and word,
Won with a subtler weapon than the sword:
And civic wreaths a greener gleam display
Than the stained garlands of the finished fray:
Peace hath her battle-fields, where they who fight
Win more than honour, vanquish more than might,
And strive a strife against a fiercer foe
Than one who comes with battle-axe and bow.
And this was thine! War's tempest fled away,
Leaving thy destinies a fairer day;
The eagles slept, the lion-flags were furled,
No battle-thunder shook the weary world,
No steel-clad legions, merciless of mood,
Stained the sweet meadows with their mowers'
blood;
But Peace, yet bleeding from the lance of War,
And Trust, and Truth, and Plenty, frighted far,
Learning, uplooking from her lettered scroll,
And Science, starting at the drum's deep roll,
And angry Justice, with white spreading wings,
Leaving for ever earth and earthly things;

These to win back, to comfort, and to calm,
Till War's wild pæan sank to peaceful psalm,
And English homes, untenanted no more,
Held hopes, and loves, and laughter, as before;
Senates to sway, and councillors to lead,
With earnest eloquence and ready deed,
And, sailing o'er a deep and dangerous flood,
To watch one guiding-star, thy country's good.
To hold to honour, for dear honour's sake,
Till Faction envied what it might not shake;
The right to succour, and the wrong subdue;—
This was thy triumph, these thy Waterloo!
Well through that bloodless fight thy virtue bore
The Stanley's banner, stainless as of yore,
The silver shield that wears no trait'rous blot,
The legend of the faith that changes not.*

Then once again, glad greeting! once again
Joy dries the tear, and Pleasures banish Pain;
The stream-girt city of the tower and dome
Bids thee high welcome to thine early home,—
Thou hear'st from tongue to tongue the tributes borne,
Where thy first laurel-wreath was won and worn;

* The motto of the Stanley family is "*Sans changer.*"

Here, in an old and well-remembered scene,—
Here, where thy verse hath rung, thy voice hath been,
Oxford, who sent thee forth, receives in pride,
Once her young son, now her grown guard and guide.
Bold in thy love, and steadfast in thy strength,
Hope hath won Memory to smile at length:—
Only, in other days, if need there be
To tell our grief for him, our love for thee,
Be this the sign:—that when we sorrowed most,
Mourning at once our Bulwark and our Boast,
To solace best a deep and anxious grief,
And best to honour England's buried chief,
We chose no meaner name, no lower line
To grace his seat, and guard her fame, than thine.

1854.

The Order of Valour.



THUS saith the Queen! "For him who gave
His blood as water in the fight,
So he from Russian wrong might save
My crown, my people, and my right;
Let there be made a cross of bronze
And grave thereon my queenly crest;
Write VALOUR on its haughty scroll,
And hang it on his breast."

Thus saith the Land! "He who shall bear
Victoria's cross upon his breast,
In token that he did not fear
To die, had need been, for her rest;
For the dear sake of her who gives,
And the high deeds of him who wears,
Shall, high or low, all honour have
From all, through all his years."

February, 1856.

On the Death of the Princess Alice.

[It will be remembered that Her Royal Highness died of diphtheria, contracted from the caresses of her little son, whom she was nursing.]

TENDER and true! whose virtue was thy crown!
Whose royalty was royally to live!
Death, sent to fetch thee, laid his arrow down,
And prayed that Love the bitter call would give;
But Love, who could not stop such gentle breath,
Whispered thy child to give the Kiss of Death!

Havelock in Trafalgar Square.

THE foot set firm! the hand upon the hilt!
  The warrior-gaze, as innocent of fear
As any maid's of shame! which, past the guilt,
  And blood and battle, sees the triumph clear;

Stand so in bronze! large to thy levelled eye,
  In the supreme imperial peril dawning,
"*Hoc signo vinces*" shines upon the sky;
  And, calm as one who knows his Master's warning,

Stand thou in bronze! stand, what thou wert, a Rock,
  Whereon Rebellion's yeasty billows breaking
Drove wave on wave—dashed high—and from the shock
  Fell back in shattered foam; thyself unshaking:

So stand!—the busy feet of men go by thee,
Each one to-day the safer for that sword;
Meeanee's just and valiant chief is nigh thee,
Palmerston, Beaconsfield, the great Sea-lord,–

Well met in some far-off serenest session,
The unimpassioned rest of great men gone;
And here together set—love's poor profession!—
In storied effigy and sculptured stone.

Ah! speaking stone and bronze, cunningly graven
To show these Champions of the English name,
Are men's hearts such, that knave and fool and craven
Can pass ye daily, and be still the same?

But, true and faithful servant! somewhere plaining
That labour multiplies and wage is none,
Read Havelock's history, and thereby gaining
The comfort of his courage, copy one

Who all life's chilly spring and summer dreary
Wrought in pure patience what he found to do,
Possessing his own soul—not once a-weary—
Content, because God was contented too.

Wherefrom he hived that honey which is sweetest,
The fruit of all the flowers of all a life,
A wisdom so perfected, so completest,
Great soldiers gave him place to stem the strife:

Which never given, Havelock's highest glory
Had lacked our knowledge, not his Master's praise,
One splendid page been lost from England's story,
But not one leaf from his immortal bays.

Go to! and work—God's servant—serving men;
Bethinking how the ranks closed up, and cried,
"*Way for the General!*" and his answer then,—
"*You have made way, my lads!*"—fair time for pride!

Adelaide Anne Procter.

"ILICET."

In Roman households, when their dear ones died,
  Thrice by his name the living called the dead;
And, silence only answering as they cried,
  Ilicet—"go thou then!"—the mourners said.

Ilicet! let her part! the Poet's child,
  Herself a mistress of the lyric song:
Ilicet!—to a world so sad and wild
  To wish her back were far less love than wrong.

Ilicet! hard the word for those to say
  Who know what gentleness is gone from earth;
Harder for those whose dwelling, day by day,
  Shone with her presence—echoed to her mirth;

Yet, if HE wills it—whom she soars to meet,
 The Lord of this world's vineyard—shall *we* ask,
Who toil on, in the burden and the heat,
 A later wage for her—a longer task?

Ilicet! let her go! though it were brave,—
 In the hot vintage, where the strongest fail,
Weeding God's grapes from thistles—still to have
 Her silver hymns o'er weariness prevail!

To hear her gentle, certain spirit of ruth
 Share its great sureties with less happy brothers,
And—from eyes bright with Heav'n's light—teach
 the truth
 Of "*little children pleading for their mothers.*"

Ilicet! Otherwhere they need those strains,
 Sounding so true for men—albeit low;
A throne was vacant (though its steps were pains),
 For a soul, tried, pure, perfect—let her go!

Sigh not. "so young!"—"such promise!"—"ah! a
 flower
 That longer life had sunned to fruit of gold."

Be still and see!—God's year, and day, and hour,
  By lapse of mortal minutes is not told.

Who go are called—*ilicet!* let her go!
  Though a sweet harp is silent in the land,
A soft voice hushed—and, never more below,
  Poet and poet's child join song and hand.

Ilicet! ilicet! nos ibimus!—
  To that divinest region of the skies,
Whence with clear sight she sees, knows, pities us,
  We shall attain!—Vex not the dead with sighs.

To America.

[Dedication of a Volume of Poems.]

THOU new Great Britain! famous, free, and bright!
  West of thy West sleepeth my ancient East;
Our sunsets make thy noons; Daytime and Night
  Meet in sweet morning-promise on thy breast.

Fulfil the promise, Lady of wide lands!
  Where, as thine own, an English singer ranks:
I, who found favour at thy sovereign hands,
  Kiss them; and at thy feet lay these, for thanks.

Armageddon.

A WAR SONG OF THE FUTURE.

Marching down to Armageddon—
Brothers, stout and strong!
Let us cheer the way we tread on
With a soldier's song!
Faint we by the weary road,
Or fall we in the rout,
Dirge or Pæan, Death or Triumph!—
Let the song ring out!

We are they who scorn the scorners—
Love the lovers—hate
None within the world's four corners—
All must share one fate;
We are they whose common banner
Bears no badge or sign,

Save the Light which dyes it white—
The Hope that makes it shine.

We are they whose bugle rings,
That all the wars may cease;
We are they will pay the Kings
Their cruel price for Peace;
We are they whose steadfast watchword
Is what Christ did teach,—
"Each man for his Brother first—
And Heaven, then, for each."

We are they who will not falter—
Many swords or few—
Till we make this Earth the altar
Of a worship new;
We are they who will not take
From palace, priest, or code,
A meaner Law than "Brotherhood"—
A lower Lord than GOD.

Marching down to Armageddon—
Brothers, stout and strong!

Ask not why the way we tread on
Is so rough and long!
God will tell us when our spirits
Grow to grasp His plan!
Let us do our part to-day—
And help Him, helping Man!

Shall we even curse the madness,
Which for "ends of State"
Dooms us to the long, long sadness
Of this human hate?
Let us slay in perfect pity
Those that must not live;
Vanquish, and forgive our foes—
Or fall—and still forgive!

We are those whose unpaid legions,
In free ranks arrayed,
Massacred in many regions—
Never once were stayed:
We are they whose torn battalions,
Trained to bleed, not fly,
Make our agonies a triumph,—
Conquer, while we die!

Therefore, down to Armageddon—
  Brothers, bold and strong—
Cheer the glorious way we tread on
  With this soldier's song!
Let the armies of the old Flags
  March in silent dread!
Death and Life are one to us,
  Who fight for Quick and Dead!

To Matthew Arnold.

["FROM EDWIN ARNOLD."]



SUFFER that—as thou takest boat to cross
Grim Charon's tide, on voyage, heavy loss
To England—but to thee gain manifold—
I pluck thee by the shroud, and press thy cold
Forgetful hand; to lay this obolus
Into its honoured palm! Ah! think on us
In thy new walks upon the Asphodel;
Nor quite forsake the sad sphere where we dwell,
Fighting thy battle, lending our small stress
To "stream which maketh unto Righteousness!"
Now, that thou better knowest friends and foes,
Good Friend! dear Rival! bear no grudge to those
Who had not time, in Life's hard fight, to show
How well they liked thee for thy "slashing blow;"

How "sweet" thy "reasonableness" seemed; how
right
Thy lofty pleading for the long-dimmed "light!"

Thou, that didst bear my Name, and deck it so
That—coming thus behind—hardly I know
If I shall hold it worthily, and be
Meet to be mentioned in one Age with thee—
Take, Brother! to the Land where no strifes are,
This praise thou wilt not need! Before the Star
Is kindled for thee let my funeral torch
Light thee, great Namesake! to th' Elysian Porch!
Dead Poet! let a poet of thy House
Lay, unreproved, these bay-leaves on thy brows!
We, that seemed only friends. were lovers: Now
Death knows it! and Love knows! and I! and
Thou!

April 15, 1888.

Song of the German Soldiers in Alsace.



In Alsace, over the Rhine,
There lives a Brother of mine;
It grieves my soul to say
He hath forgot the day
We were one land and line.

Dear Brother, torn apart,
Is't true that changed thou art?
The French have clapped on thee
Red breeches, as we see;
Have they Frenchified thy heart?

Hark! that's our Prussian drum,
And it tells the time has come.
We have made one "Germany,"
One "Deutchland," firm and free;
And our civil strifes are dumb.

Thee also, fighting sore,
Ankle-deep in German gore,
We've won. Ah! Brother dear,
Thou art German—dost thou hear?
They shall never part us more.

Who made this song of mine?
Two comrades by the Rhine;—
A Suabian man began it,
And a Pomeranian sang it,
In Alsace, over the Rhine.

Berlin.—The Sixteenth of March.

[On the Burial of the Emperor William.]

THUNDER of Funeral Guns!
Deep, sad Bells! with your boom;
Sorrowful voices of Soldiers and Folk!
Whom lay ye here in the Tomb?

"Whom?" the Cannons reply—
Baying like Dogs of War
Whose Master is gone on a path unknown—
"Our Glory, and Lord, and Star!"

"William, Kaiser and King,
For him our iron throats yell;
Victor we hailed him on many a field,
We make to his soul farewell!"

"Whom?" say the slow-swinging bells—
"William, pious and dear!
Ofttimes he knelt to the King of Kings
Where now he lies on his bier!"

"He took from his God alone
The Crown of the Fatherland;
And now he hath given it back undimmed
To Death's all-masterful hand!"

"Whom?" shout the serried ranks—
Guardsmen and Jagers and all—
"The lordliest Lord and the kingliest King
That ever raised battle-call!"

"At his word we thronged to the Field,
Sure of success to betide;
Sure that the Kaiser would fight for peace,
Sure of Heaven on our side!"

"Whom?" sigh women and men,
And fair-haired Germany boys,
And girls, with eyes of his cornflower's hue,
"For our Father we raise our voice!"

"William the Emperor dead!
  Lo! he made us one Land!
Thanks to him and his chosen chiefs,
  Strong and secure we stand!"

"Steadfast from birth to death,
  Whatso was Right he wrought!
Duty he loved, and his people, and home!
  Now to dust he is brought!"

Thunder of Funeral Guns!
  We hear you with English ears;
In English breasts it echoes—sad bells!
  This tiding your tolling bears!

Warriors, stalwart and fierce!
  We see you are tender and true;
We are come of a kindred blood, we share
  This sorrow, to-day, with you!

Folk of the Fatherland!
  Our hearts for your grief are fain!
God guard your Kaiser Frederick,
  And give ye good days again!

Hero and Leander.

SING, Muse! the signal lamp, gleaming above,
That lit the nightly swimmer to his Love;
The unseen pathway of the silent tide
That bore the bridegroom to his watchful bride;
The salt-soaked marriage robes, the moist embrace
Abydos' town, and Sestos, Hero's place;
Longing Leander, on the black waves' crest,
Eyeing the light that led to Hero's breast;
Kind light—Love's aster!—which the mighty Jove
Might well have taken to the orbs above,
And set it shining in the spangled sky
To be Love's star of all Heaven's company;
Seeing it was the planet of their bliss,
The glittering summons to the sleepless kiss,
Till the hard tempest ended him and this.
Help, then, high Muse! and teach me how to sing
Leander's death, and lamp's extinguishing.

Sestos and white Abydos—cities twain—
Fronted each other over Helle's main;
And there God Eros, setting notch to string,
Wounded two bosoms with one shaft-shooting,
A maiden's and a youth's—Leander he,
And lovely Hero, Sestos' sweetest, she;
She of her town, and he of his, the boast;
A noble pair! If ever to that coast
Thou wendest, ask for Hero's tower, and come
Where the Love's lighthouse nightly did illume
Inquire for white Abydos, too, and muse
Where young Leander life and love did lose;
But now to tell how he fair Hero loved,
And how the maid to dote on him was moved.

Honey-sweet Hero, of a princely race,
Was priestess to Queen Venus in that place;
And at her father's tower, by the sea set—
Herself a Queen of Love, though maiden yet—
Dwelt; yet, for modesty and gracious shame,
She never to the city markets came;
Nor mingled at the vintage in the dance,
Lest envious eyes upon her path should glance;-

For evil ones will flout at fairer faces,—
But ever, in the holy temple-spaces,
She worshipped foam-born Venus, Queen above,
And Eros eke, the tiny Lord of Love,
Beseeching that she might unscathëd go;
Yet none the more 'scaped she delicious woe.

It was the time of the great offering
Made with high pomp at Sestos in the spring
To Venus and Adonis, and each year
A merry crowd did come from far and near
To keep this feast: all they that have their home
Upon the rounded islets ringed with foam
In Marmora and westward;—Hœmony,
And Cyprus, sent them, and the Cretan sea;
Cythera, Phrygia, Libanus;—with these
The nigher towns and cities swarmed like bees
To see the show; but most of all the youth:—
Ever they throng where feasts are!—to tell truth,
'Tis not, methinks, the shrine which draws them so,—
To see the maidens those light pilgrims go!

And Hero, eke, went up unto the shrine,
Her face of alabaster all a-shine

Like the pure moon when first it swims the sky;
Nathless her cheek was touched with tender dye
Such as new rose-buds have—not white nor red,
But sunlit-snow: in sooth you would have said
She was all made of rose-leaves, she did show
So fair and fine under her thin gown's flow,
Such rose-leaf arms! such roseate shoulders!—
see!
Of old, they said, the Graces were but three;
Yet each sweet charm of Hero, as it seemed,
With love-spells of a hundred Graces gleamed.
Well was she worthy to be Venus' maid!

And even as she walked—stately and staid,
Liker a goddess than a priestess, fair
Beyond the fairest—Hero, unaware,
Took all eyes after her: no youth that day
But his heart beat as Hero passed that way,
Wishing such heavenly beauty his might be.
Thus, up the steps to the great Temple, she
Drew still the looks, the thoughts, the sighs of
men;
And one among the strangers whispered then:—

"Gods!—Helen's town I've seen, and Sparta's dames,
Whose charms make wars and give the world to flames;
But never saw I one that could compare
With form so goddess-like and face so rare;—
Queen Venus sure hath made the youngest Grace
Her minister this morn! oh, happy place
Which owns her! I could gaze until I die!
Would Zeus but grant me Hero, not his sky
Could tempt me to a wish! I would not be
A God, so Hero were but wife to me!
Since she is sacred and past mortal prayer,
Heaven send me soon a woman half so fair."

Thus he, and others passioned otherwise,
Heart-stricken by the light of Hero's eyes.

But thou, Leander! when those bright eyes shon
One instant on thee, of the youths alone,—
Beyond wild words, beyond fond wishes—felt
The heart within thee by love's magic melt.
Others to win her wafted many a sigh,
He alone knew that he must have or die.

In one brief glance love's lightning-flash did smite
All senses senseless with strange deep delight
Left thrilling, when her silken lashes sank,
And veiled the perilous glory his eyes drank.
What lightning strikes, in sooth, like a fair face?
What arrow pierces like a woman's grace?
'Tis the eyes slay, thence fly the subtle darts
Which deal swift wounds and hurt unguarded hearts.
So with Leander; in his bosom strove
Passion with shame, and fear with forward love:
He trembled, and then blushed to tremble so;
And vexed at blushing, straight did venturous grow;
Eros at his heart's ear whispering amain
To lay shame by and speak: so was he fain
To steal a little closer, till he stood
Foot to foot with her: then in daring mood
Sidelong he glanced and murmured half a word,
And checked it to a sigh, itself half heard:
Glance, word, and sigh so tender-timid were,
Their silent speaking could not anger her;
Nay, but it pleased! that gentle stratagem
To tell the love which burned so plain in him;
And seeming to see naught, she saw, and bent
Her sweet head from him—not in discontent;

And seeming not to hear, she heard, and sighed
A little silver sigh of pleasured pride;
By signs unwitting giving him to know
It was not anger set her cheeks a-glow;
Then turned, ashamed of nothing;—but the boy
Knew that she knew, and all his heart was joy.

So, while he lingered, one slight word to win,
Day—nigh to setting—drew his glories in;
And shadow-loving Hesperus shone high,
A speck of splendour on the violet sky:
Whereat,—the merry crowd thickening for home—
With desperate courage closer hath he come;
So close, he touched her rosy opened hand,
Heaving a deep breath, plain to understand;
And she, as one an angered, drew it in,
But so that he might see 'twas no great sin;
Then, bolder, by her stole he took the maid,
And drew imploring towards the Temple's shade;
Whereat, with pretty frown and faltering feet,
She followed, while she said, in chiding sweet

"Sir, are you mad? how dare you hold me so?
Leave plucking at my gown, and let me go!

If those who loved me saw, 'twould cost you dear;
Besides, I am a holy priestess here,
Vowed to Queen Venus! are you not afraid
To stay me so, and I, an honest maid?"

Thus, as the manner of all maidens is,
Her soft lips rated, though her heart was his;
And he by love's quick instinct knew it so,
And let her dear delicious accents flow
In anger musical, for when maids scold,
With looks that pardon, lovers may be bold:
But when she ceased and stood, he bent his head
Close to her pearly fragrant nape, and said,
With lips which trembled like his trembling heart,

"Oh, Maid!—oh, Marvel!—if of earth thou art
And not a goddess, not divine—to me
Pallas or Cytheræa thou might'st be!
Art thou not sprung indeed of heavenly birth?
Scarce dare I deem thee denizen of earth!
But if of earth, ah, me! how godlike then
He who begot thee, of all mortal men!
How happy beyond happy mothers she
Who bore and nursed thee, sweet one, on her knee;

And if of earth—oh! be of earth, and hear
My pleading lips, my earnest humble prayer!
Since thou art Venus' priestess, then take heed
Thou vex her not by cruel word and deed;
Be what thou seem'st by reverencing this shrine,
The glory of thy Goddess should be thine;
She liketh not a votary cold and coy—
Love is her worship, and her service joy:
If thou would'st keep her tender, high decree,
My earnest passion should not anger thee,
Being so born for worship: therefore thou,
If thou lov'st Venus, listen to me now.
Dear servant of this temple—I am thine!
As thou dost pray, I pray; ah! then, incline—
As thou dost ask thy goddess—pitying ears
Unto this suppliant sad with hopes and fears,
Wounded by love, and captive at thy feet,
As when, with wand of gold, Hermes the fleet
Brought Hercules—the strongest that could be—
Meek to the footstool of Queen Omphalë.
Me Aphrodite, and not Hermes, sent;
Think how thy goddess made that one repent
Arcadian Atalanta, she who vowed
To die a maid, rejecting—cold and proud—

Hippomenes; and yet it did befall
She grew to love him—heart, soul, mind, and all;
Yea! even to frenzy—whom she did not love.
Oh, Sweet! be wise, nor Venus' anger move."

So, with soft flood of loving argument,
From coy reserve to yielding thoughts he bent
The maiden's mind; but she, as maidens will,
Albeit convinced at heart, stood speechless still;
Her lustrous eyes upon the ground fast set,
And hot face turned to hide the blush on it.
Now with one sandal-tip the grass she beat,
Now drew it back, close-wrapped from head to feet,
Nought answering; yet all these were signs to bless,
And silence—well he knew—is woman's yes;
She, too, was hurt with Eros' fatal dart;
His soft flame flickered in her virgin heart;
Spite of herself it fluttered with delight
To mark how fair he was—how bold—how bright;
And, while her eyes stole from the ground to his
And back again, he stood 'tween woe and bliss,
Devouring still, with gaze she did not check,
The flower-bright flushing of her face and neck;

Till at the last she found some breath to speak,
While, pearl by pearl, tears glimmered down her cheek.

"Friend! were I marble, I must answer thee.
Who taught thee such deep eloquence? Ah, me!
Who brought thee hither, and procured us pain?
For all these sweet things said are said in vain.
How should a stranger—never seen or known—
Win me in marriage—if I would be won?
Thou could'st not ask me openly for wife,
My parents would not give me; and 'twere rife
With untold dangers if you lingered here
To meet me secretly; for all is ear,
All eye in Sestos! Things in silence done
Are said next morning at the market-stone.
But tell me—and tell true—what town is thine,
And whence thy birth and name? Thou knowest mine,
Hero of Sestos; yonder is my home,
In that tall tower whose foot stands in the foam;
And there I dwell alone—but for one slave—
Outside the walls, over the breaking wave;

Having no neighbour but the rolling sea!
No song but his rude music! none to be
Friend or companion! all the seasons there
The thunder of the mournful main I hear."

So much she said—then stayed herself, and drew
The gown before her cheek to hide its hue,
And chid herself for speaking, sore ashamed:
But he—rejoiced because her words proclaimed
Hope of the prize—went meditating hard
How he should run to win the dear reward.
For Love hath many wiles to heal the heart
Of those that bleed with his unshunnëd dart;
And, of himself, will counsel oft afford
To those of whom th' Almighty Boy is Lord:
So to Leander's heart he whispered low
A way to bliss, albeit the end was woe.

"Sweet! for thy love," he cried, "the sea I'd cleave,
Though foam were fire, and waves with flame did heave;
I fear not billows if they bear to thee;
Nor tremble at the hissing of the sea!

And I will come—oh! let me come—each night,
Swimming the swift flood to my dear delight:
For white Abydos, where I live, doth front
Thy city here, across our Hellespont.
Do but this thing, set thine own lamp on high,
To shine at evening through the dark'ling sky,
And I will be Love's ship—my pilot-star
That beam, whereto, oaring my way afar,
I shall not see Boötes, nor his wain,
And bright Orion will be bright in vain.
Only take heed, Dear, of the winds, and shield
The light that when I toil, by waves concealed,
It be not quenched by any envious blast,
Lest I go down—a ship and venture lost:
Sweetheart! do this: my name if thou dost sue,
I am Leander, Hero's lover true."

Nothing she answered, save by one soft kiss,
Which sealed the contract of their sudden bliss;
Then lip to lip they plighted faith for life
He to be husband leal, she loving wife,
Albeit unwed; and also did agree
That she should light the lamp, he swim the sea.

All which deep bargain being got by heart,
With lingering words and looks they tore apart,—
She to her tower; he through the gathering gloom,
Noting the landmarks, joyfully is come
Down to the beach, and ships with th' others there
For white Abydos, with its ramparts fair;
Then waits till night gives him his new-won bride,
And Hero watches on the other side.

Soon o'er the sky Eve's purple curtains creep,
To all but young Leander bringing sleep:
He, when the darkness deepened, eager stood
Beside the white marge of the rolling flood,
His eyes quick-searching through the hollow night
To see the first flash of his lady's light;
Far-shining light, that gleams to make him blest!
Dear light, that guides to Hero's beating breast!
She, when the darkness covered land and sea,
Kindled her lamp, and set it. Instantly
Love with that spark lighted Leander's soul;
Eager he hailed the beam; yet loud did roll
The thundering breakers on the shingly shore;—
The first wave something chilled;—but love is more

Than fear; he laid his outer garb aside,
And spake unto himself by the cold tide:

"Awful is love, and dreadful is the sea,
But fire is more than water unto me;
And this that burns is stronger than much brine:
Think most of Eros, foolish heart of mine!
Care not for tumbling billows; let us go
Straight over them to Hero; why shrink so?
Hast thou forgotten that Queen Venus came
Forth from the floods, and ever rules the same?"

Then with both hands from off his fair, smooth skin
He stripped his cloth, and tied his long locks in;
And ran upon the reef, and sprang, and clove
The keen salt waves. So, swimming to his love,
He steered with face set hard where that ray shone,
Ship—pilot—rower—merchant, all in one.

Hero, the while, upon her turret-stair,
Guarded the beacon-lamp from every air;
Spreading her gown that side and this, to keep
The breezes off; but when, up from the deep,

Leander, breathless, came safe to the strand,
Down flew she to the sea-gate—caught his hand—
In gladness past all words, her white arms flung
Round him, and on his heaving bosom hung;
And led him from the cold and foamy beach
Up to her tower; and when her room they reach,
She wiped his ivory body clean of brine,
And took the salt smell off with unguents fine,
Stained with rose-essences and scented rare,
And then she clothed him in her long dark hair,
Yet panting from his voyage; while in his ear
She poured these dulcet accents:—

"Husband dear!
Sore thou hast toiled, as never none save thee,
Battling the horrid deep, to come to me;
Forget upon my lips the wave's harsh taste,
The fierce sea-monsters and the roaring waste;
The port is reached! Anchor, dear ship! and have
The goods you sailed for in your Hero's love."

With that soft leave he loosed her virgin zone,
And took her—pure and perfect—for his own.

No marriage-rite, no festal-dance was there,
None raised the hymn to Herë for the pair;
No nuptial-torches blazed around the bed,
The merry long procession was not led;
No sire the hymenæal blessing spoke,
No tender mother "Hymen" did invoke;
But Silence spread their wedding-couch; and she
Drew the close curtains of their ecstasy;
The Night wore all her starry gems of pride,
To be bridesmaiden to that peerless bride;
Hesper kept watch, and lingered over long,
Lest Dawn should find him there, and do them wrong.
Dawn never saw Leander! ere 'twas grey
To still Abydos' walls he made his way,
Full of love's comfort, but insatiate yet;
While Hero in her turret did forget
All things save him—in that one day of life
Changed soul and body, grown from maid to wife;
And mightily did each on either shore
Pray dusk to come and daylight to be o er.

Thus many a summer night they met unseen
And had great bliss of love from Venus queen

But no joy long endureth, and not long
Lived theirs, the gentle lovers of my song;
For Winter came apace, with snow and frost,
And wild storms whistling up and down the coast:
Lashed to its depths the tortured ocean shrank,
While the wind drove its billows, rank on rank,
Scourging their crests milk-white; all sailors then
Drew up their ships upon the shore, for men
Fear the fierce winter and the furious sea;
But no fear, young Leander, hindered thee!
As oft as Hero showed the guiding light
So oft, through storm, and foam, and murky night,
Swam he with steadfast passion to that guide,
Daring the dangers of the sweeping tide.
Ah! Hero, wherefore call o'er such a sea?
Too fond thou wert; too bold and faithful he!
Thou should'st have left unlit thy lamp of love,
And waited till kind spring made green the grove;
But love and fate compelled her! so, o'ercome,
She set her light, and lured him to his doom.

There came one night, the wildest of the year,
When the wind smote like edge of hissing spear,

And the pale breakers thundered on the beach;
While in mid-sea Leander toiled to reach
The far off haven of his Hero's breast.
Sore-tossed he was from raging crest to crest;
Billow on billow rolled, the great seas roared
Furiously leaping to the clouds, which poured
Sleet and brine back, with scream of winds that met
Midway from all the quarters:—Eurus set
His blast against the West Wind; Notus blew
His cheeks to bursting, Boreas to subdue.
Ceaseless the tumult of the tempest was,
And young Leander in its midst, alas!
Battling th' inexorable bitter sea,
Called on the gods in his calamity.
To foam-born Venus many a prayer he made,
And oft the name of great Poseidon said;
And oft grim Boreas he did implore
For Orithyia's sake to help him o'er.
Nothing he gained! Fate was too strong for Love!
The chill spray-laden storm beat him above;
Below, the monstrous buffets of the sea
Struck the strength from him; till, all helplessly,
His feet dropped down, relinquishing the strife,
Though his poor hands kept feebly on for life.

O'er lip and nostril now the salt waves clomb;
Gasping for breath, he breathed but choking foam;
Yet gleamed that light, and still he strove for shore:
Sudden—a cruel gust blew!—all was o'er!
The gust extinguished Hero's lamp; the sea
Hid young Leander and his agony.

Hero, when that he came not, watched all night,
Into the darkness straining hard her sight;
And morning breaking—and no sign of him—
With aching heart she scanned the sea-face dim,
Fearing to look, because that lamp went out.
He was not there! but, casting still about,
Lo!—at the turret's foot his body lay,
Rolled on the stones, and soaked with breaking spray
She rent her robe upon her, and leaped down
Headlong, distracted, from the turret's crown.
There on his corpse she breathed her dying breath;
And, linked in life, those two were one in death.

The Feast of Belshazzar.

(This poem gained the Newdigate Prize in the University of Oxford in 1853.)



Not by one portal, or one path alone
God's holy messages to men are known;
Waiting the glances of his awful eyes
Silver-winged Seraphs do him embassies;
And stars interpreting his high behest
Guide the lone feet and glad the failing breast:
The rolling thunder and the raging sea
Speak the stern purpose of the Deity,
And storms beneath and rainbow hues above
Herald his anger or proclaim his love:
The still small voices of the summer day,
The red Sirocco and the breath of May,
The lingering harmony in Ocean shells,
The fairy music of the meadow bells,

Earth and void Air—Water and wasting Flame
Have words to whisper, tongues to tell his name.
Once—with no cloak of careful mystery
Himself was herald of his own decree;
The hand that edicts on the marble drew
Graved the stern sentence of their scorner too.
Listen and learn! Tyrants have heard the tale,
And turned from hearing terror-struck and pale;
Spiritless captives sinking with the chain
Have read this page and taken heart again.—

From sunlight unto starlight trumpets told
Her King's command in Babylon the old,
From sunlight unto starlight, west and east,
A thousand satraps girt them for the feast,
And reined their chargers to the palace hall
Where King Belshazzar held high festival:
A pleasant palace under pleasant skies
With cloistered courts and gilded galleries,
And gay kiosk and painted balustrade
For winter terraces and summer shade;
By court and terrace, minaret and dome,
Euphrates, rushing from his mountain home,

Rested his rage, and curbed his crested pride
To belt that palace with his bluest tide;
Broad-fronted bulls with chiselled feathers barred
In silent vigil keeping watch and ward,
Giants of granite wrought by cunning hand
Guard in the gate and frown upon the land:
Nor summer's glow nor yellow autumn's glare
Pierced the broad tamarisks that blossomed there;
The moonbeam darting through their leafy screen
Lost half its silver in the softened green,
And fell with lessened lustre, broken light,
Tracing faint arabesque of dark and white;
Or dimly tinting on the graven stones
The pictured annals of Chaldæan thrones.—
There, from the rising to the setting day,
Birds of bright feather sang the light away,
And fountain waters on the palace-floor
Made even answer to the river's roar,
Rising in silver from the crystal well,
And breaking into spangles as they fell,
Though now ye heard them not—for far along
Rang the broad chorus of the banquet song,
And sounds as gentle, echoes soft as these
Died out of hearing from the revelries.

High on a throne of ivory and gold,
From crown to footstool clad in purple fold,
Lord of the east from sea to distant sea
The king Belshazzar feasteth royally:—
And not that dreamer in the desert cave
Peopled his paradise with pomp as brave.
Vessels of silver, cups of crusted gold
Blush with a brighter red than all they hold;
Pendulous lamps like planets of the night
Flung on the diadems a fragrant light,
Or slowly swinging in the midnight sky
Gilded the ripples as they glided by:—
And sweet and sweeter rang the cittern-string
Soft as the beating of a Seraph's wing,
And swift and swifter in the measured dance
The tresses gather and the sandals glance,
And bright and brighter at the festal board
The flagons bubble and the wines are poured.
No lack of goodly company was there,
No lack of laughing eyes to light the cheer;
From Dara trooped they, from Daremma's grove
The suns of battle and the moons of love;
From where Arsissa's silver waters sleep
To Imla's marshes and the inland deep;

From pleasant Calah and from Sittacene
The horseman's captain and the Harem's queen.

It seemed no summer-cloud of passing woe
Could fling its shadow on so fair a show:
It seemed the gallant forms that feasted there
Were all too high for woe, too great for care:
Whence came the anxious eye, the altered tone,
The dull presentiment no heart would own,
That ever changed the smiling to a sigh
Sudden as sea-bird flashing from the sky:—
It is not that they know the spoiler waits
Harnessed for battle at the brazen gates,
It is not that they hear the watchman's call
Mark the slow minutes on the leaguered wall;
The clash of quivers and the ring of spears
Make pleasant music in a soldier's ears,
And not a scabbard hideth sword to-night
That hath not glimmered in the front of fight:—
May not the blood in every beating vein
Have quick foreknowledge of the coming pain?
Even as the prisoned silver,* dead and dumb,
Shrinks at cold Winter's footfall ere he come.—

* The quicksilver in the tube of the thermometer.

The king hath felt it and the heart's unrest
Heaved the broad purple of his belted breast;
Sudden he speaks—"What! doth the beaded juice
Savour like hyssop that ye scorn its use?
Wear ye so pitiful and sad a soul
That tramp of foeman scares ye from the bowl?
Think ye the gods on yonder starry floor
Tremble for terror, when the thunders roar?
Are we not gods? have we not fought with God?
And shall we shiver at a robber's nod?
No—let them batter till the brazen bars
Ring merry mocking of their idle wars;
Their fall is fated for to-morrow's sun,
The lion rouses when his feast is done:
Crown me a cup—and fill the bowls we brought
From Judah's temple when the fight was fought—
Drink, till the merry madness fill the soul
To Salem's conqueror in Salem's bowl—
Each from the goblet of a God shall sip
And Judah's gold tread heavy on the lip." *

* "He never drinks
But Timon's silver treads upon his lip."—SHAK. *Tit. Andr.*

The last loud answer dies along the line,
The last light bubble bursts upon the wine;
His eager lips are on the jewelled brink,
Hath the cup poison that he doubts to drink?
Is there a spell upon the sparkling gold,
That so his fevered fingers quit their hold?
Whom sees he where he gazes? what is there
Freezing his vision into fearful stare?
Follow his lifted arm and lighted eye
And watch with them the wondrous mystery.—

There cometh forth a hand—upon the stone,
Graving the symbols of a speech unknown;
Fingers like mortal fingers—leaving there
The blank wall flashing characters of fear;—
And still it glideth silently and slow,
And still beneath the spectral letters grow—
Now the scroll endeth—now the seal is set—
The hand is gone—the record tarries yet.

As one who waits the warrant of his death,
With pale lips parted and with bridled breath—
They watch the sign, and dare not turn to seek
Their fear reflected in their fellows' cheek—

But stand as statues where the life is none,
Half the jest uttered—half the laughter done—
Half the flask empty—half the flagon poured,—
Each where the phantom found him at the board
Struck into silence—as December's moon
Curbs the quick ripples into crystal swoon.

With wand of ebony and sable stole
Chaldæa's wisest scan the spectral scroll:
Strong in the lessons of a lying art
Each comes to gaze, but gazes to depart:
And still for mystic sign and muttered spell
The graven letters guard their secret well:
Gleam they for warning—glare they to condemn—
God speaketh,—but he speaketh not for them.

Oh! ever, when the happy laugh is dumb,
All the joy gone, and all the anguish come—
When strong adversity and subtle pain
Wring the sad soul and rack the throbbing brain—
When friends once faithful, hearts once all our own
Leave us to weep, to bleed and die alone—
When fears and cares the lonely thought employ
And clouds of sorrow hide the sun of joy;

When weary life, breathing reluctant breath
Hath no hope sweeter than the hope of death ;—
Then the best counsel and the last relief
To cheer the spirit or to cheat the grief,
The only calm, the only comfort heard
Comes in the music of a woman's word.
Like beacon-bell on some wild island-shore,
Silverly ringing in the tempest's roar,
Whose sound borne shipward through the midnight
gloom
Tells of the path, and turns her from her doom.

So in the silence of that awful hour
When baffled magic mourned its parted power—
When kings were pale and satraps shook for fear
A woman speaketh—and the wisest hear.
She—the high daughter of a thousand thrones
Telling with trembling lip and timid tones
Of him the Captive, in the feast forgot,
Who readeth visions—him, whose wondrous lot
Sends him to lighten doubt and lessen gloom,
And gaze undazzled on the days to come—
Daniel the Hebrew, such his name and race,
Held by a monarch highest in his grace,

He may declare—Oh!—bid them quickly send,
So may the mystery have happy end!

Calmly and silent as the fair full moon
Comes sailing upward in the sky of June—
Fearfully as the troubled clouds of night
Shrink from before the coming of its light—
So through the hall the Prophet passed along,
So from before him fell the festal throng.
By broken wassail-cup, and wine o'erthrown
Pressed he still onward for the monarch's throne:
His spirit failed him not—his quiet eye
Lost not its light for earthly majesty;
His lip was steady and his accent clear,
"The king hath needed me, and I am here."—

"Art thou the Prophet? read me yonder scroll
Whose undeciphered horror daunts my soul—
There shall be guerdon for the grateful task,
Fitted for me to give, for thee to ask—
A chain to deck thee—and a robe to grace,
Thine the third throne and thou the third in place."

He heard—and turned him where the lighted
wall
Dimmed the red torches of the festival,
Gazed on the sign with steady gaze and set,
And he who quailed not at a kingly threat
Bent the true knee and bowed the silver hair,
For that he knew the King of kings was there:
Then nerved his soul the sentence to unfold,
While his tongue trembled at the tale it told—
And never tongue shall echo tale as strange
Till that change cometh which must never change.

"Keep for thyself the guerdon and the gold—
What God hath graved, God's prophet must unfold;
Could not thy father's crime, thy father's fate
Teach thee the terror thou hast learnt too late—
Hast thou not read the lesson of his life,
Who wars with God shall strive a losing strife?
His was a kingdom mighty as thine own,
The sword his sceptre and the earth his throne—
The nations trembled when his awful eye
Gave to them leave to live or doom to die—
The Lord of Life—the Keeper of the grave,
His frown could wither and his smile could save—

Yet when his heart was hard, his spirit high,
God drave him from his kingly majesty,
Far from the brotherhood of fellow men,
To seek for dwelling in the desert den;
Where the wild asses feed and oxen roam,
He sought his pasture and he made his home,
And bitter-biting frost and dews of night
Schooled him in sorrow till he knew the right,
That God is ruler of the rulers still
And setteth up the sovereign that He will.
Oh! hadst thou treasured in repentant breast
His pride and fall, his penitence and rest,
And bowed submissive to Jehovah's will,
Then had thy sceptre been a sceptre still.
But thou hast mocked the majesty of heaven,
And shamed the vessels to its service given;
And thou hast fashioned idols of thine own—
Idols of gold, of silver, and of stone;
To them hast bowed the knee, and breathed the breath,
And they must help thee in the hour of death.
Woe for the sign unseen, the sin forgot,
God was among ye, and ye knew it not!
Hear what He sayeth thus, 'Thy race is run,
The years are numbered and the days are done,

Thy soul hath mounted in the scale of fate,
The Lord hath weighed thee and thou lackest weight;
Now in thy palace porch the spoilers stand,
To seize thy sceptre, to divide thy land.'"

He ended—and his passing foot was heard,
But none made answer, not a lip was stirred—
Mute the free tongue and bent the fearless brow,—
The mystic letters had their meaning now!
Soon came there other sound—the clash of steel,
The heavy ringing of the iron heel—
The curse in dying, and the cry for life,
The storming voices of the battle strife.—

That night they slew him on his father's throne,
The deed unnoticed and the hand unknown;
Crownless and sceptreless Belshazzar lay.
A robe of purple, round a form of clay.

The Three Roses.

Three roses, wan as moonlight, and weighed down
Each with its loveliness as with a crown,
Drooped in a florist's window in a town.
The first a lover bought. It lay at rest,
Like flower on flower that night, on beauty's breast.
The second rose, as virginal and fair,
Shrank in the tangles of a harlot's hair.
The third a widow, with new grief made wild,
Shut in the icy palm of her dead child.

ALDRICH, *Flower and Thorn.*

THESE Roses (in the world we do not see)
Strove for the palm. Thus spake the beauteous
Three:

THE MAIDEN'S ROSE.

I am the happiest flower. I lay
Dying, as suits sweet blossoms best;
It was not pain to pass away
Upon her warm and fragrant breast.

Blossom on blossoms, so we slept;
  My odours richer with her breath,
My white leaves whitest where I crept
  Closer, to die delightful death.

I heard her secrets, pure and soft;
  She kissed me, prayed for him, and laid
His gift where, since, his cheek full oft
  Nestles; he knows what words she said,

And how, when morn oped the bright eyes,
  She locked me in a casket close;
Nothing can take away my prize,
  The kiss she gave her faded Rose.

The crown, fair sisters, I must hold;
  I died upon that heavenly bed;
She buried me in silk and gold;
  I made them lovers, being dead.

THE WIDOW'S ROSE.

I am the wisest Rose: there lay
  A dew-drop on me when she shut
  The little ice-cold palm, and put
My blossom there to fade away.

It was a tear for her and me
  That she should grieve, and I should go
  Clasped in a hand that did not know;
And set to eyes that could not see.

Torn from my garden green and bright,
  As he too; first-born of her spring,
  Once flower-fair, now a lost, dead thing,
Hidden with me in graveyard night.

But lo! it was not thus at all!
  I did not think that flowers could see
  The wonder of the worlds to be
When the poor leaves of this life fall.

For while they wept, and sadly threw
  The black earth on our coffin-lid,
  A light came there where we were hid,
A wind breathed softer than I knew.

There shine no sunbeams so on earth,
  There is no air blows in such wise
  As this that swept from Paradise,
And turned grave-gloom to grace and mirth.

I saw him rise unspeakably;
  I saw how subtle Life receives
  New gifts from Death. It was but leaves—
Dead leaves—we left there, I and he.

And clasped in that small hand I came—
  A spirit-Rose as he was spirit—
  The further marvels to inherit
Of Life, which is for all the same.

Crown me, white sisters! When she bent—
  That tender mother by his grave—
  'Twas I who, with a rose-waft gave
The thought that filled her with content.

THE HARLOT'S ROSE.

I was the blessed flower! Give back
The crown, dear sisters! for you lack
My joy—you! that her bosom bore;
You they entombed!—my deeper lore.

'Twas sweet in lovely death to fade,
Rose-blossom on rose-bosom laid;
'Twas rare in grasp of Death, to see
The flower of Life blow changelessly.

But I, most happy of all three,
Rejoice for what he did to me;
Binding my bud on locks that rolled
Their wasted wealth in rippled gold.

For loveless love he set me there;
With thankless thanks she found me fair;
Laughed with sad eyes to hear him tell
The gold, with white and green, "went well."

We did our kind: she to bestow
God's grace in her rich beauty so,
That good grew evil; I to scent
Her steps and be Sin's ornament.

Yet 'twas my duty to seem sweet,
She had such bitter bread to eat!
She put me at her breast—I heard
Her heart-beats speaking, without word.

"Each spring I plucked such long ago,"
She said—"Ah, God! if we could grow
Clean like spring-roses—white again—
Forgetting last year's rain and stain!"

She said, "Ah, God! ah, mother!—some
Are blooming so about my home,
The home-breath makes me dream—let be!
I have no lover that loves me."

"What was it that we read in class?
'*And she supposing Him*'—alas!
'*The gardener*'—Fool! as if God's Son
Cares for the flowers that are done!"

Thereat our lips and leaves did kiss—
I was as sweet and soft in this
To her as any Rose could be—
"God's flowers forgive," she sighed,—"Doth He?"

And fondling me, as though she felt
Her mother's kisses on her melt,
The tear-drops from her painted lids
Ran on the rouge. "What eye forbids,"

She said, "to try if any hear?"
Mocking herself she sighed this prayer:
"Oh, Christ! I am Thy wilted Rose;
Renew me! Thou renewest those!"

Then laughed,—but did not see, as I,
The angels gather at her cry,
Their fine plots weaving out of sight
To help this soul that strove aright.

She did not feel the great wings fold
Thenceforward o'er her locks of gold;
Nor know thenceforward that the place
Was sentinelled by Shapes of grace.

But when again she bound her hair,
And set me in its tresses fair,
I did not "shrink," (as he has said:)
I was too proud! for we were led

By holy hands through lane and street,
Past things to speak of is not meet;
Till when the tender plot had place,
God's mercy met her face to face.

In all this earth there is not one
So desolate and so undone,
Who hath not rescue if hearts knew
A heart-cry goes the whole world through.

Of thousands cruel one was kind,
We found the hand she could not find;
The fragrance of me brought her cry—
We saved her: those Wise Ones and I,

I and her angels! She hath rest!
Of all Rose-service mine was best.
Oh, sisters sweet! no longer boast;
Give me the crown! My joy was most!

He and She.

"SHE is dead!" they said to him. "Come away;
Kiss her! and leave her!—thy love is clay!"

They smoothed her tresses of dark brown hair;
On her forehead of marble they laid it fair:

Over her eyes, which gazed too much,
They drew the lids with a gentle touch;

With a tender touch they closed up well
The sweet thin lips that had secrets to tell;

About her brows, and her dear, pale face
They tied her veil and her marriage-lace;

And drew on her white feet her white silk shoes;—
Which were the whiter no eye could choose!

And over her bosom they crossed her hands;
"Come away," they said,—"God understands!"

And then there was Silence;—and nothing there
But the Silence—and scents of eglantere,

And jasmine, and roses, and rosemary;
For they said, "As a lady should lie, lies she!"

And they held their breath as they left the room,
With a shudder to glance at its stillness and gloom.

But he—who loved her too well to dread
The sweet, the stately, the beautiful dead,—

He lit his lamp, and took the key,
And turn'd it!—Alone again—he and she!

He and she; but she would not speak,
Though he kiss'd, in the old place, the quiet cheek;

He and she; yet she would not smile,
Though he call'd her the name that was fondest
erewhile;

He and she; and she did not move
To any one passionate whisper of love!

Then he said, "Cold lips! and breast without breath!
Is there no voice—no language of death

"Dumb to the ear and still to the sense,
But to heart and to soul distinct,—intense?

"See, now,—I listen with soul, not ear—
What was the secret of dying, Dear?

"Was it the infinite wonder of all,
How the spirit could let life's flower fall?

"Or was it a greater marvel to feel
The perfect calm o'er the agony steal?

"Was the miracle greatest to find how deep,
Beyond all dreams, sank downward that sleep?

"Did life roll backward its record, Dear,
And show, as they say it does, past things clear?

"And was it the innermost heart of the bliss
To find out so what a wisdom love is?

"Oh, perfect Dead! oh, Dead most dear,
I hold the breath of my soul to hear,

"I listen—as deep as to horrible hell,
As high as glad heaven!—and you do not tell!

"There must be pleasures in dying, Sweet,
To make you so placid from head to feet!

"I would tell *you*, Darling, if I were dead,
And 'twere your hot tears upon *my* brow shed.

"I would say, though the Angel of death had laid
His sword on my lips to keep it unsaid.

"*You* should not ask, vainly, with streaming eyes,
Which in Death's touch was the chiefest surprise,

"The very strangest and suddenest thing
Of all the surprises that dying must bring."

Ah! foolish world! Oh! most kind Dead!
Though he told me, who will believe it was said?

Who will believe that he heard her say,
With the soft rich voice, in the dear old way:—

"The utmost wonder is this,—I hear,
And see you, and love you, and kiss you, Dear;

"I can speak, now you listen with soul alone;
If your soul could see, it would all be shown

"What a strange delicious amazement is Death,
To be without body and breathe without breath.

"I should laugh for joy if you did not cry;
Oh, listen! Love lasts!—Love never will die!

"I am only your Angel who was your Bride;
And I know, that though dead, I have never died."

"On the ——th Instant, Drowned whilst Bathing."

Ho! ho! do ye tempt me so,
  Pale dwellers upon the land;
Seem I to come for love to your home,
  Skirting the yellow sand?
When I doff my might and slumber in light
  Under the summer skies,
Do ye dream I unfold my purple and gold
  To pleasure your dainty eyes?
I mind the day when my dancing spray
  Clean over your hills was thrown;
And my waves evermore lash madly the shore
  While the great Sea seeketh its own.
Blithely ye play on the edge of my spray,
  And dabble your feet in my fords,
But little ye think how the Ocean's brink
  Is athirst for its mortal lords.

Ho! ho! how well he could row!
  The youth ye sent me to-day;
How bravely his oar drove the shallop from shore
  As he came to me out of the bay.—
I watched him come from his cottage-home
  Under the high green hill,
I foamed and dashed as the quick stroke splashed,
  And he worked his eager will.
But ho! ho!——I looked for it so!
  He leapt to my green great arm,
And felt how cold was my deep sea fold,
  And chilled with a strange alarm,
Did he deem me mild when the blue sky smiled,
  Fierce only in stormy strife?
A boat ye sent—and a life ye lent—
  But I kept the warm young life!

Ho! ho! fond fools would ye know
  How I staid the panting breath,
And weighed on the breast of the one ye loved best
  And dragged him down to his death:—
Down in the green where no sun could be seen
  To a death in the sea-weed and shells:—

Down out of sight of the sweet sunlight,
  Out of sound of the clear town bells?
Ho! he struggled sore for the fading shore,
  And fought with his failing strength;
But I swore he should die, and I smothered his cry,
  And the life was mine at length.
Ho! take the bark back without rent or wrack,
  Pale mourners along the strand!
A boatman and boat to the sea came out,
  But only a boat to land!

1855.

Dream-Land.



WONDERFUL Life!
So sad with partings, and so sweet with meetings,
Made up of wild farewells, and wistful greetings;
Oh word, with wonder rife!

What do we here?
Whence come we with this longing, loving breast?
Why do we live to die? we fear our rest;
And are afraid to fear!

Ah! tell us why,
Why are our pleasures dead within the day,
While pains make nest-homes of our hearts and stay;
Wherefore comes misery?

And wherefore Pain?
And why on our lone Planet, else so fair,
Dwell Hate, and Cowardice, and pale Despair,
And the hot rage for gain?

Moon and sweet Stars!
Hath God cursed us of all His orbs in Heaven?
Drive we alone, rayless and unforgiven,
Bloody with brother-wars?

Speak if ye know!
Why lose we what we love longest and best?
Shine, Sisters! shine upon our dark unrest,
Saying, it is not so!

I miss a face,
A friend, whose love was to my life its heart;
Why are our eyes and hands riven apart?
Why—even for a space?

Sorrow and Pain!
Hope's tender lip is silenced when ye speak,
Go to! the settled colour of my cheek
Stirs not for her again:

A cheat Life seems!
We'll laugh it off, Brothers: though we have wept!
Therewith, aweary of my thoughts I slept,
And took them to my dreams:—

Ah, mystery!
Nay then! believe it for the sweet dream's sake,
Whether I dreamed asleep, or mused awake,
An Angel spake with me!

Spake from above,—
I knew her though she floated from the skies,
The noble presence, and the large deep eyes
Of her I loved, and love:

Spake low and clear;
"Arise! I have an errand unto thee!
The heart that dares to beat as thine does, free,
Heareth, what thou shalt hear."

Thereat I rose,
Wondering to see her balanced pennons spread;
And keeping their white shadow overhead,
Followed her flying close,

Far, far away;
Till sound of mortal grief, and mortal mirth,
Died from the sky, and—far below—the Earth
A quiet, bright globe lay:

And I was 'ware
Of solemn breath breathed in that stilly spot;
And that the heart spake, though the lips moved not;
As though its home were there;

As though its home
Were high among the Angels of God's sky,
Where the wild lights were wandering;—and I
Waited for what should come;

Nor waited long:
For still wherever She and I went winging,
Two voices ever in one key were singing
The measure of one song,

Song without word;
Whereto the soft fan of the silver feather,
Made music as her great wings beat together,
And the blue ether stirred:

Then I—"Oh! whither?"
And She—"Far past the farthest ken of mortal,
To where the Star-Queen guards the Star-World's
portal,
Thither, Love mine!—aye! thither!"

So when her plumes,
Heretofore high above me gleaming white,
Wore the rich tint of Cassiopeia's light's
In crimson-coloured blooms,

Then from above
Came down the breath of an entrancing pleasure;
Came round the burden of a boundless measure,
A seraph-chaunt of Love,

High love—whose strain
Her heart and mine, in solemn symphony,
Beating beyond our wills harmoniously,
Answered, answered again.

How did I bear
The gracious glory of my Lady's eyes?
Save that the bright love in them calmed surprise
And dazzled off my fear;

Nor only eyes;
Her sweet lips touched me once upon the brow,
And whispered, "Love of mine, thou knowest now
The secret of the skies!—

"This land of Wings
Hath rest for thee and me for aye and aye."
Then I—"Sweet Saint, for my full comfort say
All that its music sings,

"All—all it sings:—
Know'st thou on Earth the earnest love I have,
Know'st thou that I could love thee in thy grave,
Better than living things?"

"Not there"—she said,
"Into this Dream-Land I have leave to come,
To cheer thee with the sight of our high Home
When Thou and I are dead;

"But there the veil
Is over souls:—I know not if I know
That thou and I shall e'er be telling so
On Earth, our true-love tale"

"Sweet! I shall seem
Graceless," I said! "but must there never be
Home-fires—home-faces—and home-loves?—ah me!
Nought of my earthly dream?"

The star-light shone
The brighter for a smile that filled her face —
No answer! but a quick and kind embrace:
Save her kiss,—answer none!

Then I, "Ah me!
The brow should wear a crown that wears thy kiss;
Though I love patiently, I shall lack this,
Not being worthy thee."

She raised her hand,
And my glance followed it—and I was 'ware
Of a fine spirit floating down the air,
Whose forehead's thought was grand;

Fast, fast and free
He smote a lyre's strings into magic measures,
Whereto a Lady listed, tranced in pleasures,
Lo! it was I and She!

And all the throng
Of all fair things I thought of day by day,
The words I would have said and could not say,
Came up into his song!

"Shall I be thus,
And thou with me?"—She said "Be true and brave,
Follow thy Life out, e'en to thy Life's grave,
And such shall be thy Bliss."

"Dear Saint"—I said,
"Lest I shall faint living a life so lone,
Tell me that absence cannot change the gone,
Nor death estrange the dead;

"They, first and last,
The comfort of whose spirits was to mine
Like Rain to Summer; ah! my heart will pine,
Its friendships seeming past.

"Say!—is it thus?
Are our hearts lower, weaker than our thinking,
Can death divide the subtle spirit-linking
Whose fine chain fettered us?

"Can they? oh Life!
Why at the first or last of thy brief day
Loose we the hand we clung to by the way,
And strive alone in the strife?"

Thereat I wept:—
But she—she touched me with a touch as mild
As a fond mother might her frightened child
Who sighed, and sighing slept.

Saying, "Rash one!
Love's strength is perfect in love's utter weakness,
Love's nobleness is noblest in love's meekness,
Love ever! none are gone!

"None go! none ever!
Know! when two hearts are set to one true time,
Always they make one music, chime one chime,
Look up! and doubt it never!"

Our starry torch
Died in a bright white flood of brilliant flame,
Wherein a myriad happy Angels came
Thronging an entrance-Porch.

With sunbeams groined;
Whence passed a voice that said, "Soul! cease thy
wonder!
Not Death is strong enough to part asunder,
Whom Life and Love have joined!"

For which word's sake,
Seeing no stars, no Angels but mine own,
I turned to kiss her hands: lo! She was flown!
And I—I was awake!

Sept. 1854.

À Ma Future.

WHERE waitest thou,
Lady I am to love? thou comest not!
Thou knowest of my sad and lonely lot;
I looked for thee ere now!

It is the May,
And each fair sister-soul hath found its brother,
Only we two seek fondly each the other.
And seeking, still delay.

Where art thou, sweet?
I long for thee, as thirsty lips for streams!
Oh, gentle promised Angel of my dreams,
Why do we never meet?

A MA FUTURE.

Thou art as I,—
Thy soul doth wait for mine, as mine for thee;
We cannot live apart; must meeting be
Never before we die?

Dear soul, not so!
That time doth keep for us some happy years,
That God hath portioned us our smiles and tears,
Thou knowest, and I know.

Yes, we shall meet!
And therefore let our searching be the stronger,
Dark ways of life shall not divide us longer,
Nor doubt, nor danger, sweet!

Hence 'tis I bear
This winter-tide as bravely as I may,
Patiently waiting for the bright spring-day
That cometh with thee, dear.

'Tis the May-light
That crimsons all the quiet college gloom;
May it shine softly in thy sleeping-room:
And so, dear wife, good night!

1853.

Llangollen.

GREEN fields and grey, corn-lands and mountain-
lands,
Beautiful Valley, thou art fair as ever!
On the same hill the same old abbey stands,
And singing the same song goes down Dee river.

I swear I love thee with mine old warm love;
My vision is not dimmed, nor my heart cold;
Wherefore then, sunny Slopes, can ye not move
My heart to gladness as ye did of old?

I know it, Dear!—these winds that fly for home
Take my heart with them to thy tender arms,
And, nestled there, it leaves me here to roam,
Half of myself, amid these wild Welsh farms.

October 1855.

The Two Wreaths.

WHEN the silver stars were throwing
   Soft lines on the silver sea,
Like a shade in the twilight showing,
   Came my life unto me.

Two garlands daintily bearing,
   Unto me came my life,
When the daylight was disappearing,
   Save that in thine eyes, dear wife.

Glittered her cymar and kirtle,
   Her garlands glimmered and shone;
One twined with the laurel and myrtle,
   And one with the rose alone.

"Which crown," she said, "shall I leave thee,
The green or the crimson wreath?
Of the chaplets thy fortune weaves thee
Choose one to deck thee till death.

"Love comes if the rose-crown rings thee,—
Love tender and ever the same;
And the bright leaf of laurel brings thee
The minstrel's favour and fame.

"But the rose hath an angry briar,
That woundeth wherever 'tis worn,
And, with laurel to lift thee higher,
There are poisonous berries of scorn."

In the silence solemnly speaking,
In the darkness sombre to see,
Answer to asking seeking,
Waited my life by me.

Then, with ready fingers upstarted
Beside her, mine own wise wife,
The leaves from the berries parted,
And the thorn from the rose of life.

And twined them, with gentle laughter,
  In a new and unharmful wreath:
And the roses and laurels hereafter
  Have crowned me for life and death.

1857.

Almond Blossom.



BLOSSOM of the almond-trees,
April's gift to April's bees,
Birthday ornament of spring,
Flora's fairest daughterling;—
Coming when no flow'rets dare
Trust the cruel outer air;
When the royal king-cup bold
Will not don his coat of gold;
And the sturdy blackthorn spray
Keeps his silver for the May;—
Coming when no flow'rets would,
Save thy lowly sisterhood
Early violets, blue and white,
Dying for their love of light.
Almond blossom, sent to teach us
That the spring-days soon will reach us.

Lest, with longing over-tried,
We die as the violets died.
Blossom, clouding all the tree
With thy crimson broidery,
Long before a leaf of green
On the bravest bough is seen;
Ah! when winter winds are swinging
All thy red bells into ringing,
With a bee in every bell,
Almond bloom, we greet thee well!

1855.

Sonnet.



LIKE one, who in the stormy crash of battle,
With sword and shield too heavy for his hold,
Bleeding, and weak, and deafened with the rattle,
Feels his limbs sinking and his heart a-cold,
Sudden a gentle eye, quiet and bold,—
A friendly look, falls on him through the fight,
And once again his tired fingers fold
About the hilt, and strike a stroke aright.—
So has thy gracious glance, lady, to-night
Nerved me with courage more than may be told;
So stand and strike I, fighting in thy sight,
Backward or forward be life's battle rolled;
And so I grasp my purpose, and I swear
To win the name that I am sent to wear.

1853.

All Saints' Day.

Up from earth to heaven's wide regions
  Send your prayer and praise to-day,
For the glorious martyr-legions
  Hence triumphant passed away.

Sigh of doubt or shade of sorrow
  Ill beseemeth heart or brow;
Theirs like ours seemed sad to-morrow,
  Who smile at our sadness now.

Let it go, a song of gladness,
  Unto brother-angels there:—
We alive in sin and sadness,
  They "dead in His faith and fear."

Dead, but on dead foreheads wearing
  Crowns that make their death a birth,
Won by hope that scorned despairing,
  Worn in heaven for wars on earth.

Nay! and name not crowned ones, only
  Nobly known for death and life,—
Hero souls, unmoved and lonely,
  Fighting in the front of strife:

But those, too, who freely, gladly,
  Uncomplaining fought to die;
Striving, striking all too madly
  To find time for battle-cry:

Those, the silent ones, who near them
  Planted foot, and fought, and fell,
With no clarion praise to cheer them,
  No voice crying ill or well;

These we owned not for God's angels,
  Shall not own before we die,
Though their lives were men's evangels,
  And their deaths our victory.

Those whose lives, unknown to others,
  Silent went to silent ends;
Some to some of us own brothers,
  All to all of us high friends;

All saints now, all now abiding
  In glad homes beyond the sky,
Wearing, where salt tears were tiding,
  Smiles of set felicity;

Smiles that call us to sky portals,
  Saying, "On! brave heart and brow
Fail not, faint not, we were mortals
  That are tranquil spirits now."

Thank God for them meekly bending,
  That such soldiers lived and died,
Ask that thine be such an ending,
  Such a death on such a side.

1854.

Serenade.

LUTE! breathe thy lowest in my Lady's ear,
Sing while she sleeps, "Ah! belle dame, aimez-vous?"
Till dreaming still, she dream that I am here,
And wake to find it, as my love is, true;
Then, when she listens in her warm white nest,
Say in slow measure,—softer, stiller, yet,
That lute-strings quiver when their tone's at rest,
And my heart trembles when my lips are set.

Stars! if my sweet love still a-dreaming lies,
Shine through the roses for a lover's sake,
And send your silver to her lidded eyes;
Kissing them very gently till she wake:
Then while she wonders at the lay and light,
Tell her, though morning endeth star and song
That ye live still, when no star glitters bright,
And my love lasteth, though it finds no tongue.

The Emigrant.

IT may be that the savage sea is foaming,
And wild winds roaming, where thy ship goes free;
Yet still as dearly, brother, and sincerely,
As if more nearly, we will cling to thee.

The white sails wing thee fast through Biscay billows,
Past English willows we are whirling on;
Though wider never did drear waste dissever,
Better than ever we will love thee gone.

We shall not know by what fair isles of blossom,
Thy bark's broad bosom ploughs the rippled blue;
What storms are chiding, what soft winds are gliding,
No longed-for tiding—yet our hearts are true:

For seeking still to know where thou art, Rover,
We but discover that our love is there;
Far, far behind thee we are strong to find thee,
Oh then remind thee of the love left here.

August 1854.

The Three Students.

[From the German.]

THERE came three students from over the Rhine,
To a certain good hostel they turned them for wine.

"Ho! Landlady, have you strong wine and beer?
How fareth the Fraulein, your daughter dear?"

"My beer is fresh, and my wine is bright;
My child will be shrouded and buried to-night."

They drew the door of her death-room back,
There she slept in her coffin black:—

The first he lifted the veil from the dead,
And bared his curls, and bended, and said,

"Ah! could'st thou but live again, maiden, here
From this day forth I would love thee dear!"

The second spread softly the face-cloth again,
And his tears fell fast as the midsummer rain:

"Dead! art thou, Lisbeth? cold, lip and brow?
Ah God! I learn how I loved thee now!"

But the third in his hand did the little hand take,
And kissed the white forehead, and smiled and spake,

"I love thee to-day as I loved thee before
I shall love thee as truly for evermore."

Jam Satis.

His mother was a Prince's child,
His father was a King;
There wanted not to his high lot,
What rank and riches bring:
Proud nobles served him on the knee,
Strong captains did his will;
Rare fortune!—yet it wearied him!
His spirit was not still.

For him the glorious music rolled
Of singers silent long;
Great Scribes did write, on scrolls of might,
The strife of Right with Wrong:
For him Philosophy unveiled
Athenian Plato's lore,
Might that not serve to stead a life?
Not that!—he sighed for more!

He loved; the newest, truest lip
 That ever lover pressed,
The queenliest mouth in all the South,
 Long love for him confessed:
Round him his children's joyousness
 Rang silverly and shrill;
Soft life!—sweet sounds! yet something lacked:
 His spirit thirsted still!

To battle all his spears he brought
 In streams of winding steel;
On breast and head of foemen dead,
 His war-horse set its heel:
The jewelled chevron on its flank
 Was red with blood of kings:
Yet Victory's laurel seemed but rank,
 [illegible] 't brings!

The splendid passion seized him then
 To break, with statutes sage,
The chains that bind our hapless kind,
 And social griefs assuage:

And dear the people's blessing seemed,
The praises of the Poor;
Yet Evil stronger is than kings
And Hate no codes can cure.

He laid aside the sword, book, pen,
And lit his lamp to wrest
From Nature's range the wonders strange
The secrets of her breast:
And wisdom deep his guerdon was,
And mighty things he knew;
Yet from each unlocked mystery
Some harder marvel grew.

No pause—no standing-spot—no place
To stay the spirit's quest;
In all around not one thing found
So good as to be—"best":
Not even Love proved quite divine;
Therefore his search did cease—
Lord of all gifts that life could bring,
Saved the one chief gift—Peace.

Then came it!—crown—lance—scroll—lamp—grew
  Each a discarded thing:
The funeral-gold did bravely hold
  The body of the king.
And strange!—love, learning, statecraft, sway,
  Looked always on before;
But those pale happy lips of clay
  Asked nothing—nothing more!

Aristippus.



LET be,—let be!
These idle follies are not for the wise,
A scholar's loves are fair philosophies;
I prithee leave me free!

Nay, Lady, nay!
I read Greek legends sweeter than thy song,—
Uncourteous! thou tarriest overlong;
I marvel at thy stay.

What! the tears glisten?
Indeed I would not wound thy little heart;
We'll be good friends, and kiss; but we must part,
In sooth,—I may not listen.

Once then, and twice,—
Ai, Cytherea! are lips like to these?
Get thee away! thy mouth hath witcheries
Strange for what is not wise.

Well,—yet again;
By Pan, it hath a soft and coral curl,
I sorrow that I angered at thee, girl!
Dis pardon me thy pain!

But thou'lt go now,—
Take hence the tresses of thy hyacinth hair.—
Nay, nay! unbind them not,—'tis over fair,—
Keep the band on thy brow;

I like it well!
Its jewels, making quaint and equal strife
With red and blue, mock lips and eyes to life;
There let them ever dwell,

Shamed of their glow;—
Now, by Athene! but I trifle long,
If thou must stay, sweet lady, sing a song,—
Doric, and grave, and slow;

One melody,—
Soft music to sage musing lends relief.—
Nay, draw not near, *thou* wilt not turn the leaf
Of old philosophy!

Well, an' thou'lt learn,
See how it saith, "That in the ancient date
Priam of Troy——" Ah! but thou must not wait
To kiss before we turn.

Thy broad braids fell,
Sweeping the page, Madonna! let me lay
On this white neck the glossy veil away,
Now we shall study well!

Oh me! thou'rt ill,—
The vermeil of thy cheek is fever-warm,
Dear one, thy heart beats ever on my arm,
And mine is never still.

What aileth me?
They fade,—the dim dull characters of Greek,
My lips lack all but kisses, if I speak
'Twill be to worship thee!

Unlock thine arms,—
Thy touch,—ai, ai! thy sweet breath is a spell,
Hide, Circe! hide thy deep breasts' ivory swell!
Oh, white witch, spare thy charms!

Nay, spare not now!
Hence, grey-beard sage! I love thee, Life of mine;
Kiss freer, faster,—I am all, all thine,
Kiss me on lip and brow.

Ettie.

WEARIE, wearie, the lang hours wear,
They stap to keek at me, and winna gae;
I count ilk ane o' their ticks wi' a tear,
Twalve o' the night, an' twalve o' the day

Aince I kenned na which was the fairest,
The shimmer o' moonlight or morning's ray;
Noo I wist na which hours be the sairest,
Twalve o' the night, or twalve o' the day.

He's aff, wha's "ever" was months twa three,
Wi' his falce fair mou', an' his steed o' the grey;
He's left me to wale what time I'll dee,
Twalve o' the night, or twalve o' the day.

Bonnie he was whan he fleeched my heart,—
 I hadna the heart to gi'e him the nay;
There wasna an hour then that saw us apart,
 Twalve o' the night, or twalve o' the day.

I'd love him again an' it were to do,
 Aiblins I greet that I lo'ed him sae;
There wasna time to love him enoo,
 Twalve o' the night, an' twalve o' the day.

They tauld me the bee wi' his braw gold coat
 Flits fair to the flower, but he winna stay:
I've muckle room noo to remind me o't,
 Twalve o' the night, an' twalve o' the day.

Whisht! puir bairnie! thou'lt madden thy mammie
 If thou'rt life-weary, why I am sae;
We'se gang to the grey sea, an' sleep there, my lammie,
 Twalve o' the night, an' twalve o' the day.

To F. C. H.

We stood at the white gate and looked o'er the lea
In September, Fred!
We saw the great river grow broad into sea;
Dost remember, Fred?
We watched grey sails while they faded away
In the grey weather, Fred;
And we asked to see whither went that seaway,
Close together, Fred!

Half was heard as it rose from the spot
With the blue smoke, Fred;
Half the Collector of Clouds heard not
That we then spoke, Fred;
By Necessity, fisher of men, caught now
Like a halibut, Fred;
Christians I teach here, and Mussulmans thou,
Close by Calicut, Fred!

Come back, and take the things that are thine
In the old land, Fred :
A warm corner, welcome, some rare Rhine wine,
And a true hand, Fred ;
And, in token that these await thee, Fred,
Ere we ferry the Styx,
I give thee,—'tis paper currency,—Fred,
Page two-sixty-six.

BIRMINGHAM, 1855.

Ah, lightly writ was that loving verse
In the old time, Fred !
That page was a leaf I let fall on thy hearse,
A flower to the Dead !
By Jumna thou sleepest, forgotten of men,
Except in this line,
For I give thee—for days of our boyhood—again
Page one-twenty-nine.

LONDON, 1888.

From Sappho.

SPLENDOUR-THRONED Queen! immortal Aphrodite!
Daughter of Jove—Enchantress! I implore thee
Vex not my soul with agonies and anguish;
Slay me not, Goddess!

Come in thy pity—come, if I have prayed thee;
Come at the cry of my sorrow; in the old times
Oft thou hast heard and left thy father's heaven,
Left the gold houses,

Yoking thy chariot. Swiftly did the doves fly,
Swiftly they brought thee, waving plumes of wonder—
Waving their pale plumes all across the æther,
All down the azure!

Very soon they lighted. Then didst thou, Divine one,
Laugh a bright laugh from lips and eyes eternal,
Ask me, "What ailed me—wherefore out of heaven
Thus I had called thee?

What it was made me madden in my heart so?"
Question me, smiling—say to me, "My Sappho,
Who is it wrongs thee? tell me who refuses
Thee, vainly sighing?"

"Be it who it may be, he that flies shall follow;
He that rejects gifts, he shall bring thee many;
He that hates now shall love thee dearly, madly—
Ay, though thou wouldst not."

So once again come, Mistress; and, releasing
Me from my sadness, give me what I sue for,
Grant me my prayer, and be as heretofore now
Friend and protectress!

HESPERUS brings all things back
Which the day-light made us lack;
Brings the sheep and goats to rest,
Brings the baby to the breast.

From Anacreon.

LOVE once among the roses
Perceived a bee reposing,
And wondered what the beast was,
And touched it, so it stung him.
Sorely his finger smarted,
And bitterly he greeted,
And wrung his hands together;
And half he ran, half fluttered
Unto Cythera's bosom,
Unto his fair, sweet mother.
Loud sobbed he, "Ai! ai! mother!
Olola! I am murdered!
Olola! it has killed me!
A small brown snake with winglets,
Which men the bumble-bee call,
Has bit me." But Cythera

Said, laughing, "Ah, my baby,
If bees' stings hurt so sorely,
Bethink thee what the smart is
Of those, Love, that thou piercest."

Nemesis.

Daughter of Justice, wingèd Nemesis;
Thou of the awful eyes,
Whose silent sentence judgeth mortal life!
Thou with thy curb of steel,
Which proudest jaws must feel,
Stayest the snort and champ of human strife;
And, hating miserable pride of men,
Dost tame fierce hearts, and turn them meek agen.

Under thy wheel, unresting, trackless, all
Our joys and griefs befall;
In thy full sight our secret things go on;
Step after step thy wrath
Follows the caitiff's path,
And at his triumph breaks his vile neck-bone.
To all alike thou metest out their due,
Cubit for cubit, inch for inch—stern—true.

From Mesomedes.

Love and Life.



LIFE without golden love—what bliss is this?
  Oh, let me die when love is dead with me!
The stolen words, the honeyed gifts, the kiss,
  These are the blossoms of youth's glorious tree.

FROM MIMNERMUS.

TWO IDYLS OF THEOCRITUS.

By the Fountain.

THYRSIS.

SOFTLY the sway of the pine-branches murmurs a melody, Shepherd!
Down by the rim of the fountain, and softly dost thou, on the Pan-pipes,
Pipe to the pines: next to Pan thou bearest the bell for rare music.
Say that he wins a great-horn'd goat, then thine is a she-goat;
Say that the she-goat is his, but thine is the kid, then; and tender
Savours the meat of a kid—till she comes to the bearing and milking.

GOATHERD.

Sweeter I call thy strain than the tinkle of water that trickles,
Tinkling, and trickling, and rippling adown the green shelves of the mountain.
If we must grant the high Muses their prize from the pick of the wethers,
Certainly thine is a ewe: or, if a ewe pleases their fancy,
Then at the least a lamb comes to thee—to drive to thy sheep-folds.

THYRSIS.

Sit thee adown, good friend—sit down, and pipe to us, Shepherd!
Here where the side of the hill slopes fair, and the myrtles are thickest,
Blow the fine melodies out: the yearlings can pasture around us!

GOATHERD.

Nay! 'twere a sin, 'twere a sin—the sun's at his highest, my Thyrsis;

Pan would be anger'd to hear me—just now, he
breaks off from hunting,
Stretches his hairy limbs in the shade, and puffs his
great nostrils,
Panting, and surly for lack of breath, and longing
for slumber.
You now, Thyrsis, might sing! you know the ballad
of Daphnis:
None of our woodside singers have half such a trick
at the measure.
Couch we here under these elms, on the grass at the
foot of the stone-god,
Facing the fountain, and looking right on to the
mountains and meadows,
Over the tops of the oaks; and if you sing only so
deftly
As you did once on that day when Chromis the
African dared you,
Look! I'll give you yon she-goat; the dam of a
couplet of weanlings;
Udder she carries for both, and then to fill two of
thy milk-bowls.
Her, and a cup cut in beech, two-handled and
polished with beeswax,

Clean and new, with the smell of the chisel and
fresh wood about it;
All round its rim, on the top, there creeps a string
of ground ivy,
Twisted and tangled with woodbine, while here and
there, in the circle,
Tendrils curl and clasp—with bunches of berries
among them.
Outside a damsel is carved—so fair the gods might
have wrought her!
Neat and trim, with her mantle and net—and—this
hand and that hand—
Two youths—both long-hair'd—both comely—con-
tend for her favours
Angrily—never a jot cares my pretty jade for their
anger!
Sometimes she flings a smile to one, and frowns to
his fellow,
Sometimes she softens to t'other; and there they
stand in the beechwood,
Laugh'd at, but mad with love—half-teased, half-
pleased at the wanton.
Next a fisherman comes, cut out on a rock, and its
ledges

Jut up rough and stark;—the old boy, done to a
marvel,
Staggers and sweats at his work—just like a fisher-
man hauling;
Looking upon it you'd swear the work was alive, and
no picture,
So do the veins knot up and swell in his neck and
his shoulders,
For, though he's wrinkled and grey, there's stuff
left yet in my ancient.
Next to this old sea-dog you see a vine—all its
branches
Heavy with globing grapes—a little lad sits by a
thicket,
Guarding the grapes, but close at hand two foxes
come creeping,
One in the vineyard munches the clusters—one's
after the wallet:
Gods! you can see his scheme—he'll keep his eye on
the youngster,
Till that he finds a chance, and leaves him dinner-
less. Blind one!
Why do you sit there weaving with grasses a cage
for your crickets,

Plaiting the grasses, and wholly forgetting your wallet and dinner,
Wholly forgetting your grapes—wrapped up in those grasshopper-engines?
All the work in this cup's filled in with leaves of acanthus;
'Tis an Æolic thing—and sooth, of a wonderful fancy,
Sirs! it cost me to buy, of the Calydon sailor, a big cheese
Made of snow-white curds, and a she-goat into the bargain;
Yet it has touch'd no lip, but lies this while in my cottage.
Look now! I mean it for you! 'tis yours, if you sing us that ditty
Half so well as you sang it before to the Himera shepherds.
No thanks! do but sing!—there's no more sunshine or singing
Under the grass—in the realm of the dead—where all is forgotten!

The Spell.

THESTYLIS! where are the laurel-leaves? Quick,
girl! bring me the love-spells!
Fasten the scarlet thread in and out round the brim
of the beaker!
Quick! for I mean to charm my lover, my false-
hearted lover.
Twelve long days are passed, and he never has once
come to see me,
Knows not if I be living or dead—never sends me a
message,
No! not even a word at my door! Has he gone to
some new love,
Light as the wings of Eros, and fleeting as Queen
Aphrodité?
Down to the town I will hasten to-morrow, and see
him, and ask him

Face to face, why he treats me so coldly: but
    Thestylis! thou now
Help me to try him with charms, and oh Moon!
    glitter thy brightest!
Shine, pale Moon! for thee I invoke, and thy sister
    and shadow
Hecat—the under-world Moon, whom even the little
    dogs howl at
When she goes forth o'er the graves, and all her
    footmarks are bloody:
Make my magic to-night as strong as ever was Circe's,
Potent as white Perimede's, and mighty as Colchian
    Medea's!

Little bird! whirl and scream, and whirl, and bring
    me my lover!
Turn wheel, turn! and burn, cake, burn! Ah!
    Thestylis, sprinkle!
What are you doing to tremble so? sprinkle the salt
    on the brazier!
Where are your wits gone, girl? or is it that you too
    must vex me?
Sprinkle the salt, and say, "Flesh and blood of
    Delphis I scatter!"

Little bird! scream, and whirl, and scream, and
bring me my lover!

Delphis grieves me—in my turn
I will grieve him. Laurel, burn!
As thy bright leaves curl and crack,
Smoke and blaze and vanish black,
Leaving not a leaf to see:
May his heart love-scorchèd be!

Little bird! whirl, and scream, little bird! and
bring me my lover!

As I melt this waxen ball
May the great gods hear me call,
And Delphis melt with love for me!
And as this wheel turns rapidly
So may Queen Venus speed the charms
And bring him quickly to my arms!

Little bird, whirl, whirl, whirl! scream! scream! and
bring me my lover!

Now I scatter on the flame
Bran. Oh! Artemis! thy name
Moves the Judge of Hell to fear,
Rhadamanth himself! Then hear!
Hear! oh, hear me! Thestylis,
Did the dogs bark? Yes, it is!
'Tis the goddess in the street!
Beat the cymbals! quick, girl! beat!

Little bird, scream!—scream louder! and bring me my false-hearted lover!

Look! the restless sea is sleeping,
Milk-white ripples curling, creeping;
Listen! all the winds are quiet,
Folded up from rage and riot;
Only in my heart the pain
Wakes, and will not sleep again!
Bitter pain the sport to be
Of him who hath unmaidened me.

Little bird, whirl—whirl fast! scream sharp—scream! call me my lover!

Thrice libations due I pay,
Thrice, great goddess! this I say,
Whom he now loves I know not,
But let her come to be forgot!
Clean forgot from head to feet
As Ariadne was of Crete.

Scream, little wretch! cry more! and whirl, and fetch me my lover!

In Arcady there grows a flower
Stings the herds with subtle power,
Drives them mad on vale and height:
Would I had that flower to-night!
Delphis should come quick to me,
Come, whate'er his company!

Scream for me still, little bird! scream once, and call me my lover!

Delphis left this gift with me.
In the fire I fling it. See!
Burn it red and burn it black,
Angry hissing flames! Alack!

It leaps away—he'll not return!
It only burneth as I burn,
And now 'tis ashes, pale and grey,
As pale as I grow day by day.

Scream ere you die, little bird! one cry to call me my lover!

Lizards green and gold I take
(Mighty magic this will make),
Slit them down from chin to tail,
Squeeze their cold blood, cold and pale.
Thestylis, take this to-morrow
(It can work him bliss or sorrow)
Lay it on his threshold stone,
Spit to the left, and say alone,
" She whose heart you tread on here
Charms you, Delphis! Love or fear!"

Dead are you, poor little fool? and you could not bring me my lover!

Ah, me! what shall I do? Alone, alone!—
I'll think the story over of my love,

How it began—what made the sweet pain come.
It was the day Anaxo was to walk
Bearing the basket for great Artemis,
With striped and spotted beasts in the procession.
Oh!—and you recollect—a lioness!

Lady Moon! listen and pity! and help me, bringing
my lover!

And my old Thracian nurse, Theucharila,
Came—you remember—teasing, tempting me
To go and see them pass, and so I went.
O fool! I went wearing the yellow bodice,
And Clearista's purple train from Tyre.

Lady Moon! listen and pity, and say where tarries
my lover!

And when we came hard by where Lycon lives
Upon the paved way, there I saw him first,
Delphis, with Eudamippus—oh, you know!
His hair danced back from off his brow, like sprays
Of bright amaracus, when west winds blow,

And all his neck, flushed with the heat of the games,
Shone as thou shinest, Moon! but rosier pearl!

Lady Moon! Lady Moon, listen, and pity, and bring
me my lover!

I saw him—looked! loved! oh, my foolish eyes!
Oh me! the coward colour of my cheeks!
Oh, heart that straight went mad! I did not mark
Those tame beasts any more; how I came home
I cannot call to mind; you know I lay
Ten days and nights indoors, and never rose.

Lady Moon! sweet pale Moon! have mercy, and
bring me this lover!

I grew as pale—as white as thapsus-wood!
Say if I braided up my hair, or sang!
Say if I grew not to a ghost, with thinking!
When was the day you sought not who he was?
Where was the crone we did not plague for charms
To bring him? All in vain; he never came!

Oh, Moon! hide not thy face. Oh, white Moon! listen and pity!

So I grew sick with waiting, and I said,
"Ah, Thestylis, help!—heal me, or I die!
This Greek boy hath bewitched me. Go, my friend!
Watch at the gateway of the wrestling-school;
He cometh there, I think, to play or sit,

Silver-faced Queen of the Stars, thou know'st we are not as immortals!

"And when he is alone, whisper full soft
And say, 'Simœtha bids thee come,' and then,
If he will, bring him!" So you went and came
Bringing my love to me. But when I heard
His sandals on the step, and saw his face—

Lady Moon! hear this now, and pity, and shine wh[illegible] I tell you!

And saw his face, I turned as cold as snow,
And tears—I wot not why—sprang to my lids,

And how to speak I knew not; not so much
As little children startled in the night,
That sob, and know it is all well—but sob,
And will not stint even for their mother's voice.
I was as dumb as dead things, Thestylis.

Queen of the planets and stars! forgive, and listen,
and pity!

For he with a bright gladness—not too bold—
Entered; and once looked hard, and then looked
down,
And sat against my feet; and sitting, said,
"Only so little, sweet Simœtha! thou
Hast been the first to speak—as I was first
Against Philinus in the race to-day,—

White-sandalled Mistress of Night! have patience,
and hear me and help me.

"I should have come, I swear it by my head!
To-morrow at the dusk. I meant to bring
Some choice rose-apples in my breast. Mayhap
You love them; and a crown of poplar leaves
Twisted with myrtle-buds and tied with red;

Lady Moon, where is he now? so soft, so gentle, so
fickle!

"And if you had seemed kind I should have spoke.
I was not hopeless, for I won the prize
At running, and the maidens call me fair.
The one prize I have longed for since the feast
Was once to touch the goal of those dear lips;
Then I could rest—not else! But had you frowned,
And bade me go, and barred your door on me,
Oh, Sweet! I think I should have come with lamps
And axes, and have stolen you like gold!"

Lady Moon, where is he now? so gentle, so earnest,
so winning!

"How shall I," he went on, "thank the gods first,
And next you—you! the queen and life of me!
My kindest love—who badst me hither come
When I did burn for leave—yea! for I think
Hephæstus lights no flame as Eros doth!"

Lady Moon, look out of heaven, and find him, and
bring him for pity.

So he spake, low and fair, and I, alas!
What could I do, but reach my hand to him,
And let him take it, and take me, and have
The kiss he sued for, and another such?
My cheeks were white no more, nor my heart sad,
Nor any trouble left; but we sat close,
And the soft talk bubbled from lip to lip
Like fountains in the roses. All that time,
And many a time we sat so: never once
Failed he to keep his word, and never once
Left, save with lingering foot. But one ill day
He did not come, and then it was I heard
Stories, that vexed me, of another love:
Melixa's mother, and the harp-player
Told me—and both are friends—he'd come no more,
And that his house was loud with pipes and songs,
And gay with crowns, not woven now for me.
Oh, Thestylis! twelve days ago this was,
And never have I seen him since that day,
And never shall, unless my magic works:
Therefore blow up the flame, and whirl the wheel!

Lady Moon! speed this spell; and fetch me my false-hearted lover.

Speed this spell! if it brings you,
Delphis, love shall live anew:
If in vain I watch and wait,
Delphis, love will turn to hate!
Subtle drugs I treasure here,
Drugs of awful force and fear:
A Syrian witch culled these for me
In lonely caverns by the sea.
Delphis, if I brew this drink
It will send you, as I think,
Down to Hades' gate, to seek
A sweeter lip, a fairer cheek.
Oh, Moon! spare me this at last!
Oh, Moon! speed it—if I must.
And now farewell! for one day more
I wait, and love him as before!
Farewell, pale Moon, and planets bright,
Watchers with me this silent night!

Lament of Adonis.

Woe is me for Adonis! gone dead is the comely Adonis!
Dead is the god-like Adonis! the young Loves wail for him, ai! ai!
Sleep no more, wrapped in thy mantles of Tyrian, lady of Cyprus!
Rise, don thy raiment of azure, pale mourner, and beat on thy bosom!
Tell out thy sorrow to all—he is dead, thy darling Adonis.

Ai! ai! wail for Adonis!—the young Loves wail for him, ai! ai!
Hurt on the hill lies Adonis the beautiful; torn with the boar's tusk,
Torn on the ivory thigh with the ivory tusk, his low gasping

Anguishes Cypris' soul: the dark blood trickles in rivers
Down from his snowy side—his eyes are dreamily dimming
Under their lids, and the rose leaves his lip, and the kisses upon it
Fade, and wax fainter, and faintest, and die, before Cypris can snatch them;
Dear to the Goddess his kiss, though it be not the kiss of the living;
Dear—but Adonis wists nought of the mouth that kissed him a-dying.

Ai! ai! wail for Adonis!—ai! ai! say the Loves for Adonis.
Cruel! ah, cruel the wound on the thigh of the hunter Adonis,
Yet in her innermost heart a deeper wears Queen Cytheræa.
Round the fair dead boy his hounds pace, dismally howling;
Round him the hill-spirits weep; but chiefest of all Aphrodite,

Letting her bright hair loose, goes wild through the depths of the forest
Passionate, panting, unkempt; with feet unsandalled, whose beauty
Thorn-bushes tear as she passes, and drip with the blood of the Goddess.
Bitterly bitterly wailing, down all the long hollows she hurries,
Calling him Husband and Love—her Boy—her Syrian Hunter.
Meantime dead in his gore lieth he—from groin unto shoulder
Bloody; from breast to thigh; the fair young flank of Adonis,
Heretofore white as the snow, dull now, and dabbled with purple.

Ai! ai! woe for Adonis! the Loves say, "woe for Adonis!"
That which hath killed her sweet lover hath killed a grace which was god-like!
Perfect the grace seemed of Cypris so long as Adonis was living;

Gone is her beauty now—ai! ai! gone dead with
Adonis:
All the hills echo it—all the oaks whisper it, "Ah,
for Adonis!"
Even the river-waves ripple the sorrows of sad
Aphrodite,
Even the springs on the hills drop tears for the
hunter Adonis;
Yea, and the rose-leaves are redder for grief; for
the grief Cytheræa
Tells in the hollow dells, and utters to townland
and woodland.

Ai! ai! Lady of Cyprus, "Lo! dead is my darling
Adonis!"
Echo answers thee back, "Oh! dead is thy darling
Adonis."
Who, good sooth, but would say, Ai! ai! for her
passionate story?
When that she saw and knew the wound of Adonis
—the death-wound—
Saw the blood come red from the gash, and the
white thigh a-waning,

Wide outraught she her arms, and cried, "Ah! stay, my Adonis!
Stay for me, ill-starred love!—stay! stay! till I take thee the last time,
Hold thee and fold thee, and lips meet lips, and mingle together.
Rouse thee—a little, Adonis! kiss back for the last time beloved!
Kiss me—kiss me—only so long as the life of a kiss is!
So I may suck from thy mouth to my mouth, to my innermost heart-beat,
All the breath of thy life, and take the last of its love-spell
Unto the uttermost end—one kiss! I will tenderly keep it
As I did thee, my Adonis, sith thou dost leave me, Adonis!
Far thou dost go and for long—thou goest to the region of shadows,
Unto a hateful and pitiless Power, and I, the unhappy,
Live! and alack! am a goddess, and cannot die and go after.

Take thou my spouse, dark Queen! have here my husband, as thou art
Stronger by far than I, and to thee goeth all that is goodly.
Utterly hapless my fate, and utterly hopeless my grief is,
Weeping my love who is dead, and hating the Fate that hath slain him.
Fled is my joy, like a dream; thou art dead, thrice lovely and longed for!
Queen Cytheræa is widowed—the Loves in my bowers are idle—
Gone my charmed girdle with thee; why, rash one, went'st thou a-hunting?
Mad wert thou, being so fair, to match thee with beasts of the forest."

So grieved the Lady of Cyprus—the young Loves wept for her sorrow,
Saying "Ai! ai! Cytheræa! gone dead is her darling Adonis."
Drop by drop as the hunter bleeds, the tears of the Goddess

Fall and blend with the blood, and both on the
ground become flowers;
Rose-blossoms grow from the blood, and wind-lilies
out of the tear-drops.

Ai! ai! comely Adonis—gone dead is the god-like
Adonis;
Wander no longer bewailing in glade and in thicket,
sad lady!
Fair is his bed of leaves, and fragrant the couch
where thy love lies,
Dead, but as lovely as life—yea, dead—but as lovely
as sleep is;
Lap him in mantles of silk—such robes as he once
took delight in
When by thy side he passed in caresses the season
of starbeams,
Lulled on a couch of gold—though dead, the raiments
become him;
Heap on him garlands and blossoms and buds, entomb
them together;
When that Adonis died, the flowers died too, and
were withered!

Rain on him perfumes and odours, shed myrtle and
spices upon him;
Let all delightful things die and go with him, for
dead is the dearest.

So lies he lovely, in death-shroud of purple, the fair
young Adonis;
Round about his couch the Loves go piteously wailing,
Tearing their hair for Adonis; and one has charge
of his arrows,
One of his polished bow, and one of his well-feathered
quiver;
One unclasps his sandal, and one in a water-pot golden
Brings bright water to lave his limbs; and one, at
the bier-head,
Fans with her pinions the forehead and eyes of the
sleeping Adonis.

Ah! but for Cypris herself the young Loves sorrow
the sorest;
Quenched are the marriage-lamps in the halls of the
God Hymenæus,
Scattered his marriage crowns; no more he sings,
"Hymen, oh! Hymen,"

"Hymen!" no more is the song he goes singing,
but evermore ai! ai!
"Ah, for Adonis," he cries, and "Ah!" say the
Graces, "Adonis!"
More than the marriage-god even, they weep for the
Syrian huntsman,
One to the other still saying, "Dead—dead is the
lovely Adonis!"
All the high Muses bewail—but he hears no more
music and singing,
Nay, not if that he would: Fate holds him fast and
for ever.

Cease, Cytheræa, thy sobs; a little while rest from
thine anguish,
Soon must thy tears flow again, and again come the
season of sorrow.

FROM BION.

Prayer to the Muses.

GLORY and praise to those sweet Lamps of earth,
The nine fair Daughters of Almighty Jove,
Who, all the passage dark to death from birth,
Lead wandering souls with their bright beams of love.

Through cares of mortal life, through pain and woe,
The tender solace of their counsel saves;
The healing secrets of their songs forego
Despair; and when we tremble at the waves

On life's wild sea of murk incertitude,
Their gentle touch upon the helm is pressed,
Their hand points out the beacon-star of good,
Where we shall make our harbour, and have rest-

The planet of our home wherefrom we fell,
  Allured by this poor show of lower things,
Tempted among earth's dull deceits to dwell:
  But oh! great Sisters, hear his prayer who sings,

And calm the restless flutter of his breast,
  And fill him with the thirst for wisdom's stream;
Nor ever suffer earthly sights unblest
  To turn his vision from the eternal beam.

Ever and ever higher, from the throng
  Lawless and witless, lead his feet aright
Life's perils and perplexities among,
  To the white centre of the sacred Light.

Feed him with food of that rich fruit which grows
  On stems of splendid learning—dower him still
With gifts of eloquence to vanquish those
  Who err;—let soft persuasion change their will.

Hear, heavenly Sisters, hear! oh, ye who know
  The winds of wisdom's sea, the course to steer;
Who light the flame that lightens all below,
  And bring the spirits of the perfect there

Where the immortals are, when this life's fever
  Is left behind as a dread gulf o'erpassed;
And souls, like mariners, escaped for ever,
  Throng on the happy foreland, saved at last.

So bring, high Muses! open me the scroll
  Where Truth is writ in characters of fire;
Roll from my eyes the mists of life—oh! roll,
  That I may have my spirit's deep desire,

Discerning the divine in undivine,
  The god in man—the life of us in death;
Nor let dire powers pluck this soul of mine
  From its most precious hope—to merge beneath

Deep floods of black oblivion, far from bliss,
  From light, from wisdom—never let dark doom
Shut my lost soul in such despair as this,
  My soul that is so weary of the gloom!

But hear and help, ye wise and shining Nine!
  I yearn and strive towards your heavenly side;
Teach me the secret of the mystic sign,
  Give me the lore that guards, the words that guide.

FROM PROCLUS.

A Dedication.



TO MY DAUGHTER.

Because I know my verse shall henceforth live
  On lips to be, in hearts as yet unbeating;
Because the East and West will some day give—
  When Faith and Doubt are friends, at some far meeting—
Late praise to him who dreamed it,—therefore, here,
  As one that carves upon a growing willow
The word it is to keep for many a year;
  As one that paints, before she breasts the billow,
A dear name on his vessel's prow; as one
  Who, finishing a fane, makes dedication
With golden letters on the polished stone,
  Crowning his toil by loving celebration,—
Here, while these last, our love I celebrate,
For thy sake and thy Mother's,—writing "Kate."

Christmas, 1884.

With a Volume of Translations.

Flowers from Greek gardens, Fannie! old turned new;
Doric, Æolic, Attic gathered here:
You made the pleasant sunshine where they grew;
Such as the growth is, have the blossoms, Dear!

Dedication of a Book.

[From the Sanskrit.]

SWEET! on the daisies of your English grave
  I lay this little wreath of Indian flowers,
Fragrant for me, because the scent they have
  Breathes of the memory of our wedded hours;

For others scentless! and for you, in Heaven,
  Too pale and faded, dear dead wife! to wear
Save that they say, which makes all fault forgiven,
  That he who brings them lays his heart too there.

1866.

The Epic of the Lion.

[From th French of Victor Hugo's "L'Art d'être Grandpère."



I.

A Lion in his jaws caught up a child—
Not harming it—and to the woodland, wild
With secret streams and lairs, bore off his prey;
The beast, as one might cull a flower in May,
Had plucked this bud, not thinking wrong or right,
Mumbling its stalk, too proud or kind to bite,—
A lion's way, roughly compassionate!
Yet truly dismal was the victim's fate;
Thrust in a cave which rumbled with each roar,
His food wild herbs, his bed the earthy floor,
He lived, half-dead with daily frightening.
It was a rosy boy, son of a king;
A ten-year lad, with bright eyes shining wide;
And, save this son, his Majesty beside

Had but one girl—two years of age—and so
The monarch suffered, being old, much woe,
His heir the monster's prey, while the whole land
In dread both of the beast and king did stand;
Sore terrified were all.
By came a Knight
That road, who halted, asking, "What's the fright?"
They told him, and he spurred straight for the den.

Oh, such a place! the sunlight entering in
Grew pale—and crept, so grim a sight was shown
Where that gaunt Lion on the rock lay prone:
The wood, at this part thick of growth and wet,
Barred out the sky with black trunks closely set;
Forest and forester matched wondrous well!
Great stones stood near, with ancient tales to tell,—
Such as make moorlands weird in Brittany,—
And at its edge a mountain you might see,
One of those iron walls which shut off heaven;
The Lion's den was a deep cavern driven
Into this granite ridge, fenced round with oaks.
Cities and caverns are discordant folks,

They bear each other grudges! this did wave
A rustling threat to trespasser,—"Hence, knave!
Or meet my Lion!"

In the champion went!
The den had all the sombre sentiment
Which palaces display—deaths—murderings—
Terrors!—you felt "here dwells one of the kings:"
Bones strewn around showed that this mighty lord
Denied himself nought which his woods afford.
A rock-rift, pierced by stroke of lightning, gave
Such misty glimmer as a den need have:
What eagles might think dawn, and owls the dusk,
Makes day enough for kings of claw and tusk.
All else was regal, though! you understood
Why the majestic brute slept, as he should,
On leaves, with no lace curtains to his bed;
And how his wine was blood—nay, or instead,
Spring-water lapped *sans* napkin, spoon, or cup,
Or lackeys.

Being from spur to crest mailed up,
The champion enters.

In the den he spies
Truly a Mighty One! Crowned to the eyes

With shaggy golden fell—the Beast!—It muses
With look infallible; for, if he chooses,
The master of a wood may play at Pope,
And this one showed such claws, there was small hope
To argue with him on a point of creed!
The Knight approached—yet not too fast, indeed!
His footfall clanged, flaunted his rose-red feather:
None the more notice took the beast of either,
Still in his own reflections plunged profound.
Theseus a-marching upon that black ground
Of Sisyphus, Ixion, and dire hell,
Saw such a scene, murk and implacable.
But duty whispered, "Forward!" so the Knight
Drew forth his sword: the Lion at that sight
Lifted his head in slow wise, grim to see.

The Knight said: "Greeting, monstrous brute, to
thee!
In this foul hole thou hast a child in keeping,—
I search its noisome nooks with glances sweeping,
But spy him not. That child I must reclaim;
Friends are we if thou renderest up the same;
If not—I too am lion, thou wilt find;
The king his lost son in his arms shall bind;

While here thy wicked blood runs, smoking-hot,
Before another dawn."
"I fancy not!"
Pensive, the Lion said.
The Knight strode near,
Brandished his blade and cried: "Sire! have a care!"
The Beast was seen to smile—ominous sight!—
Never make lions smile! Then joined they fight,
The man and monster, in most desperate duel
Like warring giants. angry, huge, and cruel;
Like tigers crimsoning an Indian wood,
The man with steel, the beast with claws as good;
Fang matching blade, hide mail. that sylvan lord
Hurled himself foaming on the flashing sword:
Stout though the Knight, the Lion stronger was,
And tore his brave breast under its cuirass;
And, striking blow on blow with ponderous paw,
Forced plate and rivet off, until you saw
Through all the armour's crack the bright blood spirt,
As when clenched fingers make a mulberry squirt;
And piece by piece he stripped the iron sheath,
Helm, armlets, greaves—gnawed bare the bones beneath,

Scrunching that hero; till he sprawled—alas!
Beneath his shield, all blood, and mud, and mess,
Whereat the Lion feasted: then it went
Back to its rocky couch and slept content.

II.

Next came a hermit.
He found out the cave;
With girdle, gown, and cross—trembling and grave—
He entered. There that Knight lay, out of shape,
Mere pulp: the Lion, waking up, did gape,
Opened his yellow orbs, heard some one grope,
And—seeing the woollen coat bound with a rope,
A black peaked cowl, and inside that a man—
He finished yawning and to growl began:
Then, with a voice like prison-gates which creak,
Roared, "What wouldst thou?"
"My King!"
"King?"
"May I speak?"
"Of whom?"
"The Prince."
"Is that what makes a King?"

The monk bowed reverence: "Majesty! I bring
A message—wherefore keep this child?"
"For that
Whene'er it rains I've some one here to chat."
"Return him!"
"Not so!"
"What then wilt thou do?
Wouldst eat him?"
"Ay—if I have nought to chew!"
"Sire! think upon his Majesty in woe!"
"They killed my dam," the Beast said, "long ago."
"Bethink thee, sire, a king implores a king."
"Nonsense—he talks—he's man! when my notes ring,
A Monarch's heard."
"His only boy!"
"Well, well!
He hath a daughter."
"She's no heir."
"*I* dwell
Alone in this my home, 'mid wood and rock,
Thunder my music, and the lightning-shock
My lamp;—let his content him!"

"Ah! show pity."
"What means that word? is't current in your city?"
"Lion, thou'dst wish to go to heaven—see here!
I offer thee indulgence, and, writ clear,
God's passport to His paradise—"
"Get hence,
Thou holy rogue!" bellowed the Beast immense.
The hermit disappeared!

III.

Thereat left free,
Full of a lion's vast serenity
He slept again, letting the still night pass:
The moon rose, starting spectres on the grass,
Shrouding the marsh with mist, blotting the ways,
And melting the black woodland to gray maze;
No stir was seen below, above, no motion
Save of the white stars trooping to the ocean:
And while the mole and cricket in the brake
Kept watch, the Lion's measured breath did make
Slow symphony which held all creatures calm.

Sudden—loud cries and clamours, striking qualm
Into the heart o' the quiet! horn and shout

Causing the solemn wood to reel with rout,
And all the nymphs to tremble in their trees!
The uproars of a midnight chase are these,
Which shake the shades, the marsh, mountain and stream,
And spoil the silence of their sombre dream.
The thicket flashed with many a lurid spark
Of torches borne 'mid wild cries through the dark;
Hounds, nose to earth, ran yelping through the wood,
And armed groups, gathering in the alleys, stood.
Terrific was the noise that rolled before;
It seemed a squadron; nay, 'twas something more—
A whole battalion, sent by that sad king
With force of arms his little Prince to bring,
Together with the Lion's bleeding hide.

Which here was right or wrong? who can decide?
Have beasts or men most claim to live? God wots!
He is the unit, we the cipher-dots.

Well warmed with meat and drink those soldiers were,
Good hearts they bore—and many a bow and spear;
Their number large, and by a captain led
Valiant, whilst some in foreign wars had bled,

And all were men approved and firm in fight.
The Lion heard their cries, affronting night,
For by this time his awful lids were lifted;
But from the rock his chin he never shifted,
And only his great tail wagged to and fro.

Meantime, outside the cavern, startled so,
Came close the uproar of this shouting crowd.
As round a web flies buzzing in a cloud,
Or hive-bees swarming o'er a bear ensnared,
This hunter-legion buzzed, and swarmed, and flared.
In battle order all their ranks were set:
'Twas understood the Beast they came to get,
Fierce as a tiger's cunning—strong to seize—,
Could munch up heroes as an ape cracks fleas,
Could with one glance make Jove's own bird look down;
Wherefore they laid him siege as to a town.
The pioneers with axes cleared the way,
The spearmen followed in a close array,
The archers held their arrows on the string;
Silence was bid, lest any chattering
Should mask the Lion's footstep in the wood;
The dogs—who know the moment when 'tis good

To hold their peace—went first, nose to the ground,
Giving no tongue: the torches all around
Hither and thither flickered, their long beams
Through sighing foliage sending ruddy gleams;—
Such is the order a great hunt should have.
And soon between the trunks they spy the cave,
A black, dim-outlined hole, deep in the gloom,
Gaping, but blank and silent as the tomb,
Wide open to the night, as though it feared,
As little all that clamour as it heard.
There's smoke where fire smoulders, and a town,
When men lay siege, rings tocsin up and down;
Nothing so here! therefore with vague dismay
Each stood, and grasp on bow or blade did lay,
Watching the horrid stillness of that chasm:
The dogs among themselves whimpered: a spasm
From the horror lurking in such voiceless places—
Worse than the rage of tempests—blanched all faces:
Yet they were there to find and fight this Thing,
So they advance, each bush examining,
Dreading full sore the very prey they sought;
The pioneers held high the lamps they brought:
"There! that is it! the very mouth of the den!"
The trees all round it muttered, warning men:

Still they kept step and neared it—look you now
Company's pleasant! and there were a thou—

Good Lord!—all in a moment, there's its face!
Frightful!—they saw the Lion! Not one pace
Further stirred any man; the very trees
Grew blacker with his presence, and the breeze
Blew shudders into all hearts present there:
Yet, whether 'twas from valour or wild fear,
The archers drew—and arrow, bolt, and dart
Made target of the Beast. He, on his part—
As calm as Pelion in the rain or hail—
Bristled majestic from the nose to tail,
And shook full fifty missiles from his hide;
Yet any meaner brute had found beside
Enough still sticking fast to make him yell
Or fly; the blood was trickling down his fell,
But no heed took he, glaring steadfastly;
And all those men of war, amazed to be
Thus met by such stupendous might and pride,
Thought him no beast, but some god brutified.
The hounds, tail down, slunk back behind the spears;
And then the Lion, 'mid the silence, rears
His awful face, and over wood and marsh

Roared a vast roar, hoarse, vibrant, vengeful, harsh,—
A rolling, raging peal of wrath, which spread
From the quaking earth to the echoing vault o'erhead,
Making the half-awakened thunder cry,
"Who thunders there?" from its black bed of sky.

This ended all!—sheer horror cleared the coast!
As fogs are driven by wind, that valorous host
Melted, dispersed to all the quarters four,
Clean panic-stricken by his monstrous roar;
Each with one impulse—leaders, rank and file,
Deeming it haunted ground, where Earth somewhile
Is wont to breed marvels of lawless might—
They scampered, mad, blind, reckless, wild with fright.
Then quoth the Lion, "Woods and mountains! see,
A thousand men enslaved fear one Beast free!"

As lava to volcanoes, so a roar
Is to these creatures; and, the eruption o'er
In heaven-shaking wrath, they mostly calm.
The gods themselves to lions yield the palm
For magnanimity. When Jove was king,
Hercules said, "Let's finish off the thing,

Not the Nemæan merely; every one
We'll strangle—all the lions." Whereupon
The lions yawned a "much obliged!" his way.

But this Beast, being whelped by night, by day—
Offspring of glooms—was sterner; one of those
Who go down slowly when their storm's at close;
His anger had a savage ground-swell in it:
He loved to take his naps, too, to the minute;
And to be roused up thus with horn and hound,—
To find an ambush sprung—to be hemmed round—
Targetted—'twas an insult to his grove!
He paced towards the hill, climbed high above,
Lifted his voice, and, as the sowers sow
The seeds down wind, thus did that Lion throw
His message far enough the town to reach.
"King! your behaviour really passes speech!
Thus far no harm I've wrought to him your son;
But now I give you notice—when night's done
I will make entry at your city-gate,
Bringing the Prince alive; and those that wait
To see him in my jaws—your lackey-crew—
Shall see me eat him in your palace too!"

Quiet the night passed, while the streamlets bubbled,
And the clouds sailed across the vault untroubled.

Next morning this is what was viewed in town:

Dawn coming!—people going!—some adown
Praying, some crying; pallid cheeks, swift feet,
And a huge Lion stalking through the street!

IV.

The quaking townsmen in the cellars hid;
How make resistance? briefly, no one did;
The soldiers left their posts, the gates stood wide;
'Twas felt the Lion had upon his side
A majesty so godlike, such an air—
That den, too, was so dark and grim a lair—
It seemed scarce short of rash impiety
To cross its path as the fierce Beast went by.
So to the palace and its gilded dome
With stately steps unchallenged did he roam,
In many a spot with those vile darts scarred still,
As you may note an oak scored with the bill,
Yet nothing recks that giant-trunk; so here
Paced this proud wounded Lion, free of fear.

While all the people held aloof in dread,
Seeing the scarlet jaws of that great head
Hold up the princely boy—aswoon.
Is't true
Princes are flesh and blood? Ah, yes! and you
Had wept with sacred pity, seeing him
Swing in the Lion's mouth, body and limb:
The tender captive gripped by those grim fangs,
On either side the jowl helplessly hangs,
Deathlike, albeit he bore no wound of tooth.
And for the brute thus gagged it was, in sooth,
A grievous thing to wish to roar, yet be
Muzzled and dumb, so he walked savagely,
His pent heart blazing through his burning eyes,
While not one bow is stretched, no arrow flies;
They dreaded, peradventure, lest some shaft
Shot with a trembling hand and faltering craft
Might miss the Beast and pierce the Prince:
So, still
As he had promised, roaring from his hill,
This Lion, scorning town and townsfolk, sick
To view such terror, goes on straight and quick
To the King's house, hoping to meet there one
Who dares to speak with him:—outside is none!

The door's ajar, and flaps with every blast;
He enters it—within those walls at last!—
No man!
For, certes, though he raged and wept,
His Majesty, like all, close shelter kept,
Solicitous to live, holding his breath
Specially precious to the realm. Now, death
Is not thus viewed by honest beasts of prey,
And when the Lion found *him* fled away,
Ashamed to be so grand, man being so base,
He muttered to himself in that dark place
Where lions keep their thoughts: "This wretched King!
'Tis well, I'll eat his boy!" Then, wandering,
Lordly he traversed courts and corridors,
Paced beneath vaults of gold on shining floors,
Glanced at the throne deserted, stalked from hall
To hall—green, yellow, crimson—empty all!
Rich couches void, soft seats unoccupied!
And as he walked he looked from side to side
To find some pleasant nook for his repast,
Since appetite was come to munch at last
The princely morsel. Ah! what sight astounds
That grisly lounger?

In the palace-grounds
An alcove on a garden gives, and there
A tiny thing—forgot in the general fear,
Lulled in the flower-sweet dreams of infancy,
Bathed with soft sunlight falling brokenly
Through leaf and lattice—was that moment waking:
A little lovely maid, most dear and taking,
The Prince's sister; all alone—undressed—
She sate up singing: children sing so best!

A voice of joy, than silver lute-string softer!
A mouth all rosebud, blossoming in laughter!
A baby-angel hard at play! a dream
Of Bethlehem's cradle, or what nests would seem
If girls were hatched!—all these! Eyes, too, so blue
That sea and sky might own their sapphire new!
Neck bare, arms bare, pink legs and stomach bare!
Nought hid the roseate satin skin, save where
A little white-laced shirt was fastened free;
She looked as fresh, singing thus peacefully,
As stars at twilight, or as April's heaven;
A floweret—you had said—divinely given,
To show on earth how God's own lilies grow;

Such was this beauteous baby-maid; and so
The Beast caught sight of her, and stopped—
And then—
Entered; the joists creaked as he stalked straight in!

Above the playthings by the little bed
The Lion thrust his shaggy massive head,
Dreadful with savage might and lordly scorn,
More dreadful with that princely prey so borne;
Which she quick spying, "Brother! brother!" cried,
"Oh! my own brother!" and, unterrified—
Looking a living rose that made the place
Brighter and warmer with its fearless grace—
She gazed upon that monster of the wood,
Whose yellow balls not Typhon had withstood;
And—well! who knows what thoughts these small heads hold?
She rose up in her cot—full height, and bold,
And shook her pink fist angrily at him.

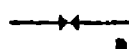
Whereon—close to the little bed's white rim,
All dainty silk and laces—this huge Brute
Set down her brother gently at her foot,
Just as a mother might, and said to her,—
"Don't be put out, now! there he is, Dear! there!"

Nencia.

A PASTORAL POEM.

By LORENZO DE' MEDICI, surnamed "The Magnificent."

Translated for the first time, and in the original metre, from the Italian.



[This pastoral by the great Florentine Ruler, Lorenzo the Magnificent, is taken from the Italian text, printed at Bergamo in 1763 A.D. The Bergameso editor remarks, of the fifty stanzas composing it, "*Sono nel loro genere incomparabili*;" and all may certainly admire the dramatic force with which the illustrious Medicean has, as it were, entered into the very heart and soul of his peasant, to depict a rural passion. The "Nencia" was probably written about A.D. 1480—the dawn of the golden age of Italian art—when the "Magnificent" Lorenzo was chief of all the scholars and poets, as well as of his citizens of Florence, and gathered at his table such men as Michael Angelo, Luca Signorelli, Ghirlandajo, Filippino Lippi, Botticelli, Pulci, Poliziano, and Pico de Mirandola.]

I.

I BURN with love,—love makes me bold to sing
   Praise of the damsel who undoes my heart;
Each time I think a little tender thing
   About her, 'tis as if my breath would part:

The world her match for beauty cannot bring,
  No other eyes such lovely lightnings dart;
In town and tower and city have I been,
But seen none nowhere like my country-queen.

II.

To Monticelli, every market-day,
  To Prato, Empoli, and San Casciano,
To Poggibonsi, and to Colle gay,
  By San Donato down to Dicamano;
To Castelfranco, all Figline-way;
  San Pier', Montagna, Borgo, Gagliano,
Oftimes I wend,—a-buying and a-selling—
And Barberin, where my Nenciozza's dwelling.

III.

But never once—saving at Barberin—
  See I a girl so dear, discreet, and taking,
With cheek, and neck, and nape, and dimpled chin
  So smooth and white; or of such perfect making.
Her eyes! 'tis like torch-light, when feasts begin,
  To feel their lids lift, and their glance awaking
Joyance; and 'twixt them comes the winsome nose
With proud pink nostrils, like the pits in a rose.

IV.

Of pink sea-coral are her dear lips dight,
With, underneath, two strings of sea-pearls plenty;
A Tuscan foal's milk-row is not so white!
(To judge thereby my Nencia's come to twenty.)
Her stainless cheeks have all the softened light
Of misted marble, chiselled smooth and dainty;
Amid the blooms of Beauty she is Rose;
The wide world no such lovely wonder shows!

V.

Beyond all noble fortunes fortunate
He'll be, who takes her to his happy bosom;
Well might he call his star glorious and great
Whose lot it is to wear this heavenly blossom:
Well may he make his peace thenceforth with Fate,
And lightly bear whatever ills should cross him,
Who clasps fair Nencia as his wedded wife,
White as wild wax, and with love's honey rife!

VI.

I'll liken thee to fairy cloudland gleams
Which mix the welkin and the world together;

I will compare thee unto Dian's beams
  Who round poor cabins sheds her silver weather;
Spring-water none so fresh and sparkling seems,
  Nor late-trod wine so luscious. Sweet one! whether
Early or late we see thee, 'tis as neat
And fair and wholesome as new-bolted wheat!

VII.

Her eyes can steal a shepherd's soul away
  Through wall of flesh, whenever she doth look;
You see her, and you love, the selfsame day,
  Albeit the story goes her heart is rock;
Troops of tamed lovers her behests obey,
  And live upon her will, a patient flock:
'Tis little she can lose giving one glance,
But, whoso wins it, how his heart doth dance!

VIII.

La Nencia mia! Ah, the pearl she seems
  Going afoot, on Saints' Days, to hear matins!
She wears a bodice which right bravely gleams
  Of damask, and a skirt of brightest satins,
A golden girdle clasps her waist, and streams
  Down to the knee with jewelled pins and patines;

When she hath heard the Mass, and paceth home,
How like a heavenly angel she doth come!

IX.

She hath no fellow at the sheaf-tying,
  She works and laughs when all the rest are sped;
Or else at home her merry wheel, fast-flying,
  Spins ducats for her with its dancing thread:
For whatso's deft and rich she will be trying,
  Woollen or silk; and all the while her head
Droops like a snow-drop when the neighbours, [illegible] mustered,
Praise her. She is as sweet as millet-custard!

X.

Thou hast so witched me with thy braided brow
  I cannot ply my mattock as before;
For meat and drink I have no stomach now:
  No morsel can I swallow any more:
I grow so thin, the withered winter-bough
  Lets the blast through it with a sigh less sore.
Nor day nor night repose or comfort brings,
I am so tied to thee by twenty strings.

XI.

I am so wild with utter love of thee,
All night I toss and groan and start and sigh;
The kindly gossips say, to comfort me,
"Shepherd! take heart! thou'lt win her by-and-by."
The village damsels jest because they see
I go with cornamuse, where thou dost lie,
At eve, and sing for love some little trifle,
But thou dost sleep, or with hushed laughter stifle.

XII.

Last night I could not sleep a single wink,
It seemed a thousand years ere dawn would break,
Bethinking thou wouldst take thy flock to drink
At daytime, and wouldst wend down to the lake;
So, not to miss one passing blessed blink
Of those black eyes, I, for their sweet light's sake,
Waited two hours against the bake-house close
Till the full moon set and my Nencia rose.

XIII.

My Nencia's beauty hath not any blot,
She's stately, straight, and tall as wench can be;

A dimple in her chin my love hath got,
  Which makes her bright laugh lovelier to see.
There is no single charm she boasteth not;
  I think dame Nature framed her purposely
So fair, so fine, so noble, and so tender,
That all the world might homage to her render.

XIV.

I culled a posy of snow-blossomed spray,
  With buds and berries gathered here and there,—
It was for thee; but thou didst turn away
  So grand! not deigning answer, foul or fair.
Then spake I to myself, "My love doth play
  The high and mighty; I will match her here!"
And ofttimes since, albeit I turn mine eye,
The folks may see how proud I pass them by.

XV.

Yesterday, all day long, I watched for thee
  Hard by the mill: I said: "If she comes now
It cannot happen but my chance will be;
  The beasts are safe, grazing upon the brow:
We'll loiter by the kiln, Nencia and me;
  We'll stroll together to the fountain,—thou

And thy Vallera,—under th' hiding vine;
I will tend thy flock and thou shalt herd mine!"

XVI.

And when at last from your cot-door you came,
Holding the hound from hurrying the sheep,
My heart swelled in my breast, and shook my frame,
While tears of joy down either cheek did creep:
I started for the cross roads, all aflame,
Quickening my calves and heifers up the steep;
And waited on the knoll where thou shouldst pass,
But at the by-path thou didst turn—alas!

XVII.

When next thou comest with thy water-pot,
Wend, I beseech thee, hither to our well!
I'll draw for thee, and make all toil forgot:
Who knows but there will be something to tell?
Ofttimes I had a mind to hide it not
When thou wert by, but fear always befell;
Yet, if this is to hap, why linger longer?
The chestnut's on the bough, the grapes grow stronger!

XVIII.

It was in April that my heart was caught,
The day I saw thee plucking herbs and cresses.
I spake thee fair, but thou didst answer nought
And frowned, because folks passed, tossing thy tresses;
To know thy name and house I vainly sought,
Lest love be lost for what one word expresses;
And from that hour I was no more the same:
I grew thy thrall; thou hadst me, meek and tame.

XIX.

Nenciozza mia! I have a mind to go—
Now that my beasts are in the will to drink—
Down to the pool, where thou must come, I know,
And there to sit me still upon the brink,
Till I shall spy thee cross. To loiter so
Were pleasant, if it happen as I think.
I'll stay like stone until my sweet hath passed;
Ah! do not make my watching vain at last!

XX.

Nenciozza mia! I go a' Saturday
To sell two loads of wood in Florence-town;

While the sleek heifers cropped the flowers away
  I set me yesterday to cut it down.
Ah! if thou'dst come, Dear!—But at least I may
  Bring fardels for thee, buttons for thy gown,
Powder, pomander,—not to beautify thee!—
Or pins, or needles: something let me buy thee!

XXI.

Jove! when she dances, what a step and skill!—
  What lightness! like a kid's her quick feet fly!
She turns as swiftly as the sails of a mill,
  And marks the music, hand and foot and eye:
And, when all's ended, courtesy low she will
  And take two backward steps, so gracefully!
She makes the very prettiest salute,
There's not in Florence any dame could do't!

XXII.

Ask me, Dear! some small trifle from the fair!
  What shall I fetch thee, what slight dainty thing?
A brooch of carved shell for my love to wear?
  Or hooks and eyes, or buckles, or silk strings?
A broidered gipsire for thy kirtle, Dear!
  Or lace to tie thy lappets, shall I bring?

Or wilt thou choose, to bind thy bodice close,
A cord of sky-blue silk? or none of those

XXIII.

But a long necklace for thy milky throat,
Strung with round coral beads of rosy pink,
All with a cross to swing midway; and, note,
They make them great and small! which dost thou think
The prettier? if my blood could drop, God wot!
Round ruddy beads to please thee, 'twould not shrink!
So, if I find thy fancy, hold it thine,
Though I should pawn this jacket, Nencia mine!

XXIV.

If thou shouldst say, when Sieve rolls at flood,
"Fling thyself in!" I'd headlong leap straightway!
If thou shouldst bid so end my life, I would
Dash head against a rock, and die that way!
Command me any deed that seemeth good
In those dear eyes and I shall straight obey.
I know some promise thus abundantly
Who would not spoil a pair of shoes for thee.

XXV.

Yea! and I know—my Nencia! my heart's treasure!
There's some one whispers thee in my despite:
Let him beware! I'll give him market measure;
Six inches in his midriff, sharp and bright!
Thou'st seen the knife I wear! Dio! 'tis pleasure
To mark it do its work at feast or fight!
If in my quarters it finds any man,
By God! the steel shall make him skip a span!

XXVI.

Oh, me! a lass like this white maid of mine,—
So honey-sweet and winning, ne'er was seen!
She's lusty, large, and fresh, and still so fine,
So fair and graceful,—of all feasts the queen.
But yet that mirth and modesty combine
To keep her ever all she should have been;
And how her singing all the feast enhances!
And, dancing, how all dancers she outdances!

XXVII.

I too know something!—with the best I'd vie
If, Nencia! I dared open all my heart:

There is no better judge porklings to buy;
I shine at plough and harrow, spade and cart:
When, stripped, I tie my seed-bag on, or ply
The axe, they say, "What a stout wight thou art!"
The mattock and the pick I wield like thunder,
And blow the horn and cow-pipes till you wonder.

XXVIII.

But Thou, but thou! Ah, none is like to thee!
A well-scrubbed kneading-trough is not so white!
As syrup draws the flies thou drawest me;
As figs tempt wasps so art thou my delight;
Richer than rape-blooms, sweet as what the bee
Sucks from their gold thou art! Oh, if I might
One kiss of honey from that red mouth rifle,
New goat's cheese after such would seem a trifle.

XXIX.

I've waited all this while for thee to pass,
Musing my love where the quick waters shine;
My beasts have grazed off every bite of grass,
I must not tarry, or the fools will pine.
What doest, Nencia! not to come? Alas!
I looked to see thy wandering charge and mine

Mix in the willows, then 'twere one hour's gain
To let them seem one flock, though we be twain!

XXX.

Nenciozza mia! 'tis time for me to go:
My yearlings must be tethered in the stall,
God be with thee! I send fond farewell so—
Far off; for Mona Masa loud doth call.
My heart stays here! have pity! let me know
Thou giv'st me back some tittle, if not all,
Of thine. Good-bye! Good-night! *la buona sera!*
Sleep soft, and think kind things of thy Vallera!

XXXI.

Nencia! Nenciozza! one day say you will
Climb the hill with me through the willows here!
Promise! say, "Yes, I'll come!" and fear no ill,
Nenciozza mia! I'll deserve thee, Dear!
Nencia! I love thee so; my love is still
So great and true, I'd die to bring thee cheer!
If thou wert stung by some beast fell and frightful,
I'd suck the poison, and think death delightful!

XXXII.

Or we might meet farther away, where yonder
 The sun's eye doth not shine in the green gloom;
Don't say "you could not answer!" do not ponder
 If we should hear them when they called from
  home:
But come, and lift thy hood, and let the wonder
 Of thy dark lovely eyes gleam on me! Come!
Eyes which befit thy beauteous breast and brow
Being angelic, and an angel thou.

XXXIII.

Cara Nenciozza mia! I hear the bleating
 One of thy flock makes in the close below,
Some wolf, maybe, is there—killing and eating,
 With deadly jaws, thy lambkin. Nay, 'tis so!
Wilt thou not take thy staff—wilt thou not? sweeting!
 And with me in the lonely valley go,
To strike the caitiff dead? I'll be with thee!
But all the folk shall say: "She killed him! She!"

XXXIV.

Ah, come! I know a nest of speckled thrushes
 Ready to fly; the prettiest feathered thing!

'Tis hid away in a thick clump of bushes,
There are no caged birds that so sweetly sing!
To-morrow I will show you, for time pushes,
If thou'dst rear one; and then, Dear! I will bring
An oaten cake; while—for a good excuse—
I shall pass, playing on my cornamuse.

XXXV.

Nenciozza mia! I shall not seem a clown
When I get home my broidered vest to wear,
And lace my shoes, and tie my long hair down,
You'll take me for a sleek, rich townsman, Dear!
Just now I know I'm rough about the crown,
The barber asks too much my locks to shear
And curl, but if my marketing goes fairly
I will be barbered properly and rarely.

XXXVI.

Farewell! my Lily with the lovely bloom!
I see the beasts are breaking for the wheat;
To-morrow, Nencia! when again I come,
I'll bring you wild wood strawberries—if they're sweet—

So, when you hear my cornamusa boom,
Trip to the spot we wot, where the roads meet,
At corner of the orchard. I can find
Dittany there for thee, if thou'st a mind!

XXXVII.

I asked thee of thy father—dost thou know?
Old Beco droned me out some doubtful word,
And, taking counsel of thy mother so,
Gave me to understand I'm not preferred;
Yet look for me to come—('less thou say'st "no"—)
With such a band some day to catch my bird
That none shall let. I've told father and mother
Thee I will have for wife, and never other!

XXXVIII.

Oh, when I see thee compassed round with folk,
Something inside me seems to boil and swim
But if one makes thee eyes, ah, I could choke,
My heart leaps up my throat to come at him!
Alas! poor heart! by this 'twere burst and broke,
So full of thee it is; full to the brim!
But that its thousand sighs, each one an anguish,
Fly all day long to thee, saying "I languish!"

XXXIX.

Nenciozza! Come at dinner-time! we'll eat
Salads together, and, it may be, cheese;
Be sure you keep your word to come, my sweet!
But so that no accursed gossip sees.
I bear my weapons, Dear! if we did meet
Some of old Beco's crew under the trees
There'd be wild words—I know—and blood, may be;—
The Devil flay them, if they flout at me!

XL.

I talk too fierce! Ah, Nencia!—when she goes,
On feast-days, what a pearl of grace she seems!
Smooth, white, and clean, and neat from top to toes:
A little ring on each midfinger gleams.
For she hath store of trinkets, and bestows
So trimly here and there her beauty's beams.
Pearls too—fine pearls—my love wears! Not the best
Can anywhere compare with Nencia dressed!

XLI.

Ah, Nencia! didst thou know the love immense,
The burning love I bear for those bright eyes,

The tears I pour, the grievous woe intense
  That seems to crack and rend me with deep
      sighs;
If thou knewedst this, and all—thy gentle sense
  Would melt—thou wouldst all lesser love despise,
And cry, "My poor Vallera! thou art he
That lov'st me most, thou shalt not woful be!"

XLII.

I marked thee, Nencia! tripping home that day
  From Santo—oh, so splendid! I was dazed.
Thou hadst a mind to take the meadow way
  And slipped adown where Beco's asses grazed.
I hid myself; quoth I, "Meet now we may!"
  Then while you singing tripped, I, breathless,
      gazed;
And so drew closer; but ere this could pass
You spied me, and you turned aside, alas!

XLIII.

Nenciozza mia! it made me dumb with pleasure
  To see thy rose-fair face even thus near:
If I could once more come so nigh my treasure
  I'd live upon such joy a whole long year!

If I could speak thee forth my love's full measure
  Meseems my life's luck would be perfect, Dear!
If in my grasp that dear hand I could hold,
I'd not unclasp, to get mine filled with gold!

XLIV.

I'm here! but Nencia does not come, nor wake:
  Nencia! why art thou such a slug-a-bed?
Thou hearest me; thou know'st that for thy sake
  I blow this cornamuse; why art thou hid?
Thou wert not wont such heavy sleep to take!
  Pleaseth no more the music, as it did?
All day I conned this gentle strain to sing thee,
I meant it for a charm would surely bring thee.

XLV.

O heart too hard! what maiden would not render
  Love to a lover loving her like me?
Who else would melt not, and wax honey-tender
  Seeing me suffer thus? Ah, Nencia! see!
Thou knowest I am so faithful; must it end here
  The pain which should be crowned with joy by
    thee?

Ah, yield a little! one kind thought discover,
Then deal with me as pitchforks do with clover!

XLVI.

Nay, when one speaks of forks, how deft she is!
There's no such nimble worker in the land;
She weaves a hat of straw that way and this,
With knots and ends so dexterously planned,
You never saw such skill! the neighbours press,
To see the plaits obey her cunning hand.
She can make osier-pots, and baskets, too,
And what the best doth, that will Nencia do.

XLVII.

Nencia! ah, Nencia! I do love thee so!
As the poor moth the flame which crisps his wings;
Ah mia Nenciozza! seeking thee I go
As flies to honey, when the sweetness brings
Death. Must I die? Then shine, dear Lantern! oh,
Shed sweet death, Honey! But if better things
Await me, then, kind Love! be this now said
Before the chestnuts fall and grapes grow red.

XLVIII.

Peace, poor Vallera! peace, thou foolish youth!
  Wasted thy song is, and thy sorrow vain!
It seemed she liked me once, but now, in sooth,
  She likes me not, I see: therefore sharp pain
Rives me and drives me, sobbing: for no ruth
  My love will show, and these hot tears again
Tell to what anguish I am led, alas!
Who shake with passion, if she only pass.

XLIX.

Nencia! Nenciozza! thou wilt be my death!
  Yet so to see me die can please thee not.
Ah, would to God that I could keep my breath
  Whilst I drew forth my heart, and laid it hot
Upon thy hand, to hear how its beat saith,
  "*Nencia! Nenciozza!*"—and to witness what
A load it bears! But, if thou didst so take
My heart in hand, 'twould sigh, "Keep me!" and
    break!

L.

Good-bye! *Nenciozza!* Heaven have guard of thee!
  The weary beasts are to their homestead near;

I must not have, for any fault of me,
  Some heifer left lowing outside her lair;
The last one now will o'er the river be.
  (Yea! yea! Madonna Masa! I can hear!
I come!) Farewell, cold Love! She calls again,
There's Nanni bustling, and the wine to strain!

The Stratford Pilgrims.

"Ah! the troop at the Tabard Inn,
Manciple, Miller, and Frankelyn,
Tightening the girths, and draining the ale,
And away on their wild ride by river and dale!
Gone, Dan Chaucer! gone, but for thee
Is the clatter of that gay companie,
The rattle and ring of stirrup and spur,
Floating of plume, and folding of fur,
With the round of tales that held from town
To the sweet green slopes of the broad South Down.
Certes! with such it were pleasant indeed
To patter an Ave, or finger a bead,
And forth each dawn by the cock to wend
From shrine to shrine unto Albion's end;
But their day is done, and their course is run,
None goeth forth on a pilgrimage—none!"

"Well! but the woods are as green as then,
And the sunshine as splendid on grey rock and glen;
The linnet and missel-thrush sing, I trow,
With as rich a trill in their little throats now;
Rivers will ripple, and beech-boughs wave,
And the meadows be decked in a dress as brave,
And the great glad sky build a roof as blue,
Tho' it overarch only pilgrims two.
Sweetheart, come! let us do as they
Did in old time on as fair a day:
We lack but a chapel whereunto to wend,
A shrine and a saint for our journey's end;
And of that gay ride—the shrine, God wot,
Is the dusty goal that I envy them not."
"Nay, pardie!" quoth she that I love,
"Fit for thy mood as the hand for the glove,
Or the hilt of his sword for the soldier's fist,
Or a poet to be praised, or a lip to be kissed,
Far on yon path, by the emerald lea,
Fair Avon glideth adown to the sea;
By the walls of a church, beneath whose stones
Sleeps dust sacred as saintly bones,—
His whom thou lovest."

"Right good!" I said,
And forth a foot to the lea I led,
With staff and scrip and a spirit in tune
To the merry noise of a midsummer noon;—
Two we were of one heart and age
Going a pious pilgrimage.

Sooth! I doubt if palmers as gay
Ever set forth on so fair a way.
Sooth! I doubt if a day so rare
Ever made pilgrimage half so fair.
But, certes! never did palmers go
To holier shrine than where he lies low,
Who miracles wrought for heart and eye:
The wonder of Imogen's constancy,
The airy marvels of Prospero's isle,
The magic of Queen Cleopatra's smile;
Her barge that burned on the glowing water,
The patience and faith of Lear's leal daughter,
The Roman Portia's fond, firm heart,
And the Veronese lovers death did not part.
Something I laughed, Heav'n, 'ield it me,
At Beckett and Benedict saints,—not he!
So came we on where the wayfarer sees

Red Warwick fading behind the trees,
And Guy's great castle beside the town,
That "setter up," and that "puller down."
For "Stratford—ho!" our green road lay,
And I spake, with my heart in the ancient day;
"Sweet! thou art fair for a prioresse,
And I am an 'Oxenforde clerke,' no less;
Tell out some fable of olden time!
I rede you to prove by line or rhyme,
That woman was true!"—"Benedicite!"
"Hearken my story and judge," quoth she.

VERNIER.

If ever thou shalt follow silver Seine
Through his French vineyards and French villages,
For love of love and pity turn aside
At Vernier, and bear to linger there!
The gentle river doth so—lingering long
Round the dark marshland, and the pool Grand'mer,
And then with slower ripple steals away
Down from his merry Paris. Do thou this;
'Tis kind to keep a memory of the dead,—
The bygone, silent dead; and these lie there,
Buried a twenty fathoms in the pool,

Whose rough cold wave is closed above their grave,
Like the black cover of an ancient book
Over a tearful story.

Very lovely
Was Julie de Montargis: even now—
After six hundred years are dead with her,
Her village name—the name a stranger hears—
Is, "La plus belle des belles;"—they tell him yet,
The glossy night-black pansies of the land
Lost depth in her dark hair; and that she owned
The noble Norman eye—the violet eye,
Almost—so far and fine its lashes drooped—
Darkened to purple:

All the country-folk
Went lightly to their work at sight of her;
And all their children learned a grace by heart,
And said it with small lips when she went by,
The Lady of the Castle.

Dear past words
Was all this beauty and this gentleness
Unto her first love and her playfellow,
Roland le Vavasour

Too dear to leave,
Save that his knightly vow to pluck a palm,

And bear the cross broidered above his heart,
To where upon the cross Christ died for him,
Led him away from loving.
But a year,
And they shall meet—alas! to those who joy,
It is a pleasant season, all too short,
Made of white winter and of golden spring,
With autumn fruitage after summer-nights:
But parted lovers count the minutes up,
And see no sunshine.
Julie heeded none,
When she had belted on her Roland's sword,
Buckled his breastplate, and upon her lip
Taken his last long kisses.
Listen now!
She was no light-o'-love, to change and change,
And, deeply written on her heart, she kept
The night and hour the star of Love should see
A true love-meeting. Walking by the pool.
Many a time she longed to wear a wing,
As fleet and white as the swift sea-bird spread,
That she might hover over Roland's sails,
Follow him to the field, and in the battle
Shield the hot Syrian sun from dazing him:

High on the turret many an autumn eve,
When the wise, wandering swallow tried his plumes
For foreign flight, she gave him messages,—
Fond messages of love, for Palestine,
Unto her knight. What wonder, loving so,
She greeted well the brother that he sent
From Ascalon with spoils—Claude Vavasour?
Could she do less?—he had so deft a hand
Upon the mandolin, and sang so well
What Roland did so bravely; nay, in sooth,
She had not heart to frown upon his songs,
When they sang other love and other deeds
Than Roland's, being brother to her lord.
Yet sometimes was she grave and sad of eye,
For knowledge of the spell her glance could work
Upon its watcher. Ah! he came to serve,
And stayed to love her; and she knew it soon,
Past all concealment. Oftentimes his eyes,
Fastened upon her face, fell suddenly,
For brother-love and shame; but, once and twice,
Julie had seen them, through her tender tears,
Fixed on some messenger from Holy Land
With wild significance, the drawn white lips
Working for grief, because she smiled again.

He spake no love—he breathed no passionate tale,
Till there came one who told how Roland's sword,
From heel to point, dripped with the Paynim blood;
How Ascalon had watched, and Joppa's lists,
And Gaza, and Nicæa's noble fight,
His chivalry; and how, with palm-branch won,
Bringing his honours and his wounds a-front,
His prow was cleaving Genoa's sapphire sea,
Bound homewards. Then, the last day of the year,
Claude brought his unused charger to the gate;
Sprang to the broad strong back, and reined its rage
Into a marble stillness. Yet more still,
Young Claude le Vavasour, thy visage was,
More marble-white.

She stood to see him pass,
And their eyes met; and, full of tears were hers
To mark his suffering; and she called his name,
And came below the gate; but he bowed low,
And thrust the vizor close over his face,
So riding on.

Before St. Ouen's shrine
That night the lady watched—a sombre night,
With fleeting beams of fitful moonlight sent
'Twixt driving clouds; the grey stone statues gleamed

Through the gloom ghost-like; the still effigies
Of knight and abbess had a show of life,
Lit by pale crimsons and faint amethysts
That fell along them from the oriels;
And if she broke the silence with a step,
It seemed the echo lent them speech again
To speak in ghostly whispers; while, o'er all,
With a weird paleness midnight might not hide,
Straight from the wall St. Ouen looked upon her,
Knitting his granite brows, bidding her hope
No lover's kiss that night—no loving kiss—
None—though there came the whisper of her name,
And a chill sleety blast of wintry wind
Moaning about the tombs, and striking her,
For fear, down to her knees.

That opened porch
Brought more than wind and whisper; there were steps,
And the dim wave of a white gaberdine—
Horribly dim; and then the voice again,
As though the dead called Julie. Was it dead,
That form which, at the holy altar foot,
Stood spectral in the flickering window-lights?
It does not turn, nor speak, nor seek for her,

But passes thro' the chancel, grim and still!
Ah, Holy Mother! dead—and in its hand
The pennon of Sir Roland, and the palm,
Both laid so stilly on the altar front;
A presence like a knight, clad in close mail
From spur to crest, yet from his armed heel
No footfall; a white face, white as the stones,
Lit by the moonlight long enough to know
How the dead kept his tryst; and It was gone,
Leaving the lady on the flags, ice-cold.

Oh, gentle River! thou that knowest all,
Tell them how for a while she mourned her Knight;
How her grief withered all the rose-bloom off,
And wrote its record on her fading cheek;
And say, bright River! lest they do her wrong,
All the sad story of those twenty moons,
The true-love dead—the true-love that lived on—
Her clinging memories, and Claude's generous praise,
Claude's silent service, and her tearful thanks;
And ask them, River, for Saint Charity,
To think not too much wrong, that so she gave,

Her heart being given and gone, her hand to him,
The Brother of her Lord.—
Now banish care!
Soothe it with flutings, startle it with drums!
Trick it with gold and velvets, till it glow
Into a seeming pleasure. Ah, vain! vain!
When the bride weeps, what wedding-gear is gay?
And since the dawn she weeps—at orisons
She wept—and while her women clasped the zone,
Among its jewels fell her mocking tears.
Now at the altar all her answers sigh;
Wilt thou?—Ah! fearful altar-memories—
Ah! spirit-lover—if he saw me now!
Wilt thou?—"Oh me! if that he saw me now!"
He doth, he doth! beneath St. Ouen there,
As white and still—*yon monk whose cowl is back!*
Wilt thou?—"Ah, dear love, listen and look up."
He doth—ah God! with hollow eyes a-fire.
Wilt thou?—pale quivering lips, pale bloodless lips—
"I will not—never—never—Roland—never!"

So went the bride a-swoon to Vernier;
So doffed each guest his silken braveries;
So followed Claude, heart-stricken and amazed,

And left the Chapel. But the monk left last,
And down the hill-side, swift and straight and lone,
Sandals and brown serge brushed the yellow broom,
Till to the lake he came and loosed his skiff,
And paddled to the lonely island-cell
Midway over the wavelets. Long ago
The people of the lonely water knew
He came alone to dwell there—'twas the night
Of Lady Julie's vigil; ever since
The simple fishers left their silver tithe
Of lake-fish for him on the wave-worn flags,
Wherefrom he wandered not, save when that day
He went unasked, and marred the bridal show,—
Wherefore none knew, nor how,—save two alone,
A lady swooning—and a monk at prayers.

And now not Castle-gates, nor cell, nor swoon,
Nor splashing waters, nor the flooded marsh,
Can keep these two apart. The Chapel-bells
Ring Angelus and Even-song, and then
Sleep, like her waiting maidens—only Blanche,
Her foster-sister, lying at the gate,
Dreaming of roving spirits—starts at one,
And marvels at the night-gear, scantly hid,

And, overdone with pity at her plaint,
Lets her dear Lady forth, and watches her
Gleaming from crag to crag—but lost at last,
A white speck on the night.
More watchful eyes
Follow her flying;—down the water-path,
Mad at his broken bridals, sore amazed
With fear and pain, Claude tracks the wanderer—
Waits, while the wild white fingers loose the cord—
But when she drove the shallop through the lake
Straight for the island-cell, he brooked no stay,
But doffed his steel-coat on the reedy rim,
And gave himself to the quick-plashing pool,
And swimming in the foam her fleetness made,
Strove after—sometimes losing his white guide,
Down-sinking in the dark wash of the waves.

Together to the island-cell they come,
The shallop and the swimmer—she alone
Thrusts at the wicket,—enters wet and wild.
What sees he there under the crucifix?
What holds his eyesight to the ivied loop?
Oh, Claude!—oh furious heart! be still, or break!
The Monk and Julie kneeling, not at prayer!

She kisses him with warm, wild, eager lips—
Weeps on his heart—that woman, nearly wived,
And "Sweetest love," she saith, "I thought thee dead."
And he—who is he that he fondles so
In his her shaking hands, and bends adown,
Crying, "Ah, my lost love! it was no ghost
That left the palm-branch; but I saw thee not
In the dim moonlight of the midnight aisle;
And heard their talk of Claude, and held thee false,
These many erring days." Now, gaze no more,
Claude, Claude, for thy soul's peace! She binds the
brand
About his gaberdine, with close caress;
She fondles the thin neck, and clasps thereon
The gorget! then the breast-piece and the helm
Her quick touch fastens. "Come away," she cries,
"Thou Knight, and take me from them all for thine.
Come, true-love! come." The pebbles, water-washed,
Grate with the gliding of the shallop's keel,
Scarce bearing up those twain.

Frail boat, be strong!
Three lives are thine to keep—ah, Lady pale,
Choose of two lovers—for the other comes
With a wild bound that shakes the rotten plank.

Moon! shine out clear for Claude's avenging blow!
She glitters on a quiet face and form
That shuns it not,—yet stays the lifted death.
"My brother Roland!" — "Claude, ah, brother mine!"—
"I thought thee dead!"—"I would that I had died
Ere this had come!"—"Just God! but she is thine!"—
"He wills her not for either! look, we fill,
The current drifts us, and the oars are gone,
I will leap forth!"—"Now by the breast we sucked,
So shalt thou not: let the black waters break
Over a broken heart!"—"Nay, tell him no;
Bid him to save thee, Julie—I will leap!"
So strove they sinking, sinking—Julie bending
Between them; and those brothers over her
With knees and arms close locked for leave to die
Each for the other;—while the Moon shone down,
Silvering their far-off home, and the black wave
That struck, and rose, and floated over them,
Hushing their death-cries, hiding their kind strife,
Ending the love of those great troubled hearts
With silence, save for lapping of the lake.

"Verily!" spake I, "a troubled dame!
Sweet! grand' merci for this same!
Tender and sad is the chronicle
That Vernier taught thee featly to tell!
Tenderer, fairer its lessons seem
From lips which speak and eyes which beam
So true a truth, and so fast a faith,
Oh Love, whom I love for life and for death!—
But thou in thy turn have heed to me;
I know a story of constancy
Where woman was changeful, and man was true:
Peradventure, Kate! I shall tell it through
Before we come where Shakespeare's bones
Make holy walking of Stratford stones!

"Nay, but recount!" she softly said,
Doubtfully tossing a wilful head:
And hand in hand, in the shade of the limes,
I told this tale of the Saracen times.

KING SALADIN.

Long years ago—so writes Boccaccio
In such Italian gentleness of speech
As finds no echo in this northern air

To counterpart its music—long ago,
When Saladin was Soldan of the East,
The kings let cry a general crusade;
And to the trysting-plains of Lombardy
The idle lances of the North and West
Rode all that spring, as all the spring runs down
Into a lake, from all its hanging hills,
The clash and glitter of a hundred streams.
  Whereof the rumour reached to Saladin;
And that swart king—as royal in his heart
As any crownèd champion of the Cross—
That he might fully, of his knowledge, learn
The purpose of the lords of Christendom,
And when their war and what their armament,
Took thought to cross the seas to Lombardy.
Wherefore, with wise and trustful Amirs twain,
All habited in garbs that merchants use,
With trader's band and gipsire on the breasts
Which best loved mail and dagger, Saladin
Set forth upon his journey perilous.
  In that day, lordly land was Lombardy!
A sea of country-plenty, islanded
With cities rich; nor richer one than thou,
Marble Milano! from whose gate at dawn—

With ear that little recked the matin-bell,
But a keen eye to measure wall and fosse—
The Soldan rode; and all day long he rode
For Pavia; passing basilic, and shrine,
And gaze of vineyard-workers, wotting not
Yon trader was the Lord of Heathenesse.
All day he rode; yet at the wane of day
No gleam of gate, or ramp, or rising spire,
Nor Tessin's sparkle underneath the stars,
Promised him Pavia; but he was 'ware
Of a gay company upon the way,
Ladies and lords, with horses, hawks, and hounds;
Cap-plumes and tresses fluttered by the wind
Of merry race for home. "Go!" said the king
To one that rode upon his better hand,
"And pray these gentles of their courtesy
How many leagues to Pavia, and the gates
What hour they close them?" Then the Saracen
Set spur, and being joined to him that seemed
First of the hunt, he told the message—they
Checking their jangling bits, and chiding down
The unfinished laugh, to listen—but by this
Came up the king, his bonnet in his hand,
Theirs doffed to him: "Sir Trader," Torel said

(Messer Torello 'twas, of Istria),
"They shut the Pavian gate at even-song,
And even-song is sung." Then, turning half,
Muttered, "Pardie, the man is worshipful,
A stranger too!" "Fair lord!" quoth Saladin,
"Please you to stead some weary travellers,
Saying where we may lodge, the town so far
And night so near." "Of my heart, willingly,"
Made answer Torel, "I did think but now
To send my knave an errand—he shall ride
And bring you unto lodgment—oh! no thanks,
Our Lady keep you!" then with whispered hest
He called their guide and sped them. Being gone,
Torello told his purpose, and the band,
With ready zeal and loosened bridle chains,
Rode for his hunting-palace, where they set
A goodly banquet underneath the planes,
And hung the house with guest-lights, and anon
Welcomed those wondering strangers, thereto led
Unwitting, by a world of winding paths;
Messer Torello, at the inner gate,
Waiting to take them in—a winsome host,
Stamped current with God's image for a man
Chief among men, truthful, and just, and free.

There he, "Well met again, fair sirs! Our knave
Hath found you shelter better than the worst:
Please you to leave your selles, and being bathed,
Grace our poor supper here." Then Saladin,
Whose sword had yielded ere his courtesy,
Answered, "Great thanks, Sir Knight, and this much blame,
You spoil us for our trade! two bonnets doffed,
And travellers' questions holding you afield,
For such you give us this." "Sir! not your meed,
Nor worthy of your breeding; but in sooth
That is not out of Pavia." Thereupon
He led them to fair chambers decked with all
Makes tired men glad; lights, and the marble bath,
And flasks that sparkled, liquid amethyst,
And grapes, not dry as yet from evening dew.
Thereafter at the supper-board they sat;
Nor lacked it, though its guest was reared a king,
Worth provend in crafts of cookery,
Pastel, pasticcio—all set forth on gold;
And gracious talk and pleasant courtesies,
Spoken in stately Latin, cheated time
Till there was none but held that stranger-sir,
For all his chapman's dress of cramasie,

Goodlier than silks could make him. Presently
Talk rose upon the Holy Sepulchre:
"I go myself," said Torel, "with a score
Of better knights—the flower of Pavia—
To try our steel against King Saladin's.
Sirs! ye have seen the countries of the Sun,
Know you the Soldan?" Answer gave the king,
"The Soldan we have seen—'twill push him hard
If, which I nothing doubt, you Pavian lords
Are valorous as gentle;—we, alas!
Be Cyprus merchants making trade to France—
Dull sons of Peace." "By Mary!" Torel cried,
"But for thy word, I ne'er heard speech so fit
To lead the war, nor saw a hand that sat
Liker a soldier's where thy sword should be;
But sure I hold ye sleepless!" Then himself
Playing the chamberlain, with torches borne,
Led them to restful beds, commending them
To sleep and God, Who hears—Allah or God—
When good men do His creatures charities.

At dawn the cock, and neigh of saddled steeds,
Broke the king's dreams of battle—not their own,
But goodly jennets from Torello's stalls,
Caparisoned to bear them; he their host

Up, with a gracious radiance like the sun,
To bid them speed. Beside him in the court
Stood Dame Adalieta; comely she,
And of her port as queenly, and serene
As if the braided gold about her brows
Had been a crown. Mutual good-morrow given,
Thanks said and stayed, the lady prayed her guest
To take a token of his sojourn there,
Marking her good-will, not his worthiness;
"A gown of miniver—these furbelows
Are silk I spun—my lord wears ever such—
A housewife's thought! but those ye love are far;
Wear it as given for them." Then Saladin—
"A precious gift, Madonna, past my thanks;
And—but thou shalt not hear a 'no' from me—
Past my receiving; yet I take it; we
Were debtors to your noble courtesy,
Out of redemption—this but bankrupts us."
"Nay, sir,—God shield you!" said the knight and
dame:
And Saladin, with phrase of gentilesse
Returned, or ever that he rode alone,
Swore a great oath in guttural Arabic,
An oath by Allah—startling up the ears

Of those three Christian cattle they bestrode—
That never yet was princelier-natured man,
Nor gentler lady;—and that time should see
For a king's lodging quittance royal repaid.

It was the day of the Passaggio:
Ashore the war-steeds champed the burnished bits;
Afloat the galleys tugged the mooring chains:
The town was out; the Lombard armourers—
Red-hot with riveting the helmets up,
And whetting axes for the heathen heads—
Cooled in the crowd which filled the squares and streets
To speed God's soldiers. At the nones that day
Messer Torello to the gate came down,
Leading his lady;—sorrow's hueless rose
Grew on her cheek, and thrice the destrier
Struck fire, impatient, from the pavement-squares,
Or ere she spoke, tears in her lifted eyes,
"Goest thou, lord of mine?" "Madonna, yes!"
Said Torel, "for my soul's weal and the Lord
Ride I to-day: my good name and my house

Reliant I intrust thee, and—because
It may be they shall slay me, and because,
Being so young, so fair, and so reputed,
The noblest will entreat thee—wait for me,
Widow or wife, a year, and month, and day;
Then, if thy kinsmen press thee to a choice,
And if I be not come, hold me for dead;
Nor link thy blooming beauty with the grave
Against thy heart." "Good my lord!" answered
she,
"Hardly my heart sustains to let thee go;
Thy memory it can keep, and keep it will,
Though my one love, Torel of Istria,
Live, or ——" "Sweet, comfort thee! San Pietro
speed!
I shall come home: if not, and worthy knees
Bend for this hand, whereof none worthy lives,
Least he who lays his last kiss thus upon it,
Look thee, I free it——" "Nay!" she said, "but I,
A petulant slave that hugs her golden chain,
Give that gift back, and with it this poor ring:
Set it upon thy sword-hand, and in fight
Be merciful and win, thinking of me."
Then she, with pretty action, drawing on

Her ruby, buckled over it his glove—
The great steel glove—and through the helmet bars
Took her last kiss :—so let the chafing steed
Have its hot will and go.
But Saladin,
Safe back among his lords at Lebanon,
Well wotting of their quest, awaited it,
And held the Crescent up against the Cross.
In many a doughty fight Ferrara blades
Clashed with keen Damasc, many a weary month
Wasted afield; but yet the Christians
Won nothing nearer to Christ's sepulchre;
Nay, but gave ground. At last, in Acre pent,
On their loose files, enfeebled by the war,
Came stronger smiter than the Saracen—
The deadly Pest: day after day they died,
Pikeman and knight-at-arms; day after day
A thinner line upon the leaguered wall
Held off the heathen :—held them off a space;
Then, over-weakened, yielded, and gave up
The city and the stricken garrison.

So to sad chains and hateful servitude
Fell all those purple lords—Christendom's stars,
Once high in hope as soaring Lucifer,

Now low as sinking Hesper: with them fell
Messer Torello—never one so poor
Of all the hundreds that his bounty fed
As he in prison—ill-entreated, bound,
Starved of sweet light, and set to shameful tasks;
And that great load at heart to know the days
Fast flying, and to live accounted dead.
One joy his gaolers left him,—his good hawk;
The brave, gay bird that crossed the seas with him:
And often, in the mindful hour of eve,
With tameless eye and spirit masterful,
In a feigned anger checking at his hand,
The good grey falcon made his master cheer.

One day it chanced Saladin rode afield
With shawled and turbaned Amirs, and his hawks—
Lebanon-bred, and mewed as princes lodge—
Flew foul, forgot their feather, hung at wrist,
And slighted call. The Soldan, quick in wrath,
Bade slay the cravens, scourge the falconer,
And seek some wight who knew the heart of hawks,
To keep it hot and true. Then spake a Sheikh—
"There is a Frank in prison by the sea,
Far seen herein." "Give word that he be brought,"

Quoth Saladin, "and bid him set a cast:
'If he hath skill, it shall go well for him."

Thus, by the winding path of circumstance,
One palace held, as prisoner and prince,
Torello and his guest: unwitting each,
Nay and unwitting, though they met and spake
Of that goshawk and this—signors in serge,
And chapmen crowned, who knows?—till on a time
Some trick of face, the manner of some smile,
Some gleam of sunset from the glad days gone,
Caught the king's eye, and held it. "Nazarene!
What native art thou?" asked he. "Lombard I,
A man of Pavia." "And thy name?" "Torel,
Messer Torello called in happier times,
Now best uncalled." "Come hither, Christian!"
The Soldan said, and led the way, by court
And hall and fountain, to an inner room
Rich with king's robes: therefrom he reached a gown,
And "Know'st thou this?" he asked. "High lord! I might
Elsewhere," quoth Torel, "here 'twere mad to say
Yon gown my wife unto a trader gave
Who shared our board." "Nay, but that gown is this,

And she the giver, and the trader I,"
Quoth Saladin; "I! twice a king to-day,
Owing a royal debt and paying it."
Then Torel, sore amazed, "Great lord, I blush,
Remembering how the Master of the East
Lodged sorrily." "It's Master's Master thou!"
Gave answer Saladin, "come in and see
What wares the Cyprus traders keep at home;
Come forth and take thy place, Saladin's friend!"
Therewith into the circle of his lords,
With gracious mien the Soldan led his slave;
And while the dark eyes glittered, seated him
First of the full divan. "Orient lords,"
So spake he,—"let the one who loves his king
Honour this Frank, whose house sheltered your king;
He is my brother:" then the night-black beards
Swept the stone floor in ready reverence,
Agas and Amirs welcoming Torel:
And a great feast was set, the Soldan's friend
Royally garbed, upon the Soldan's hand,
Shining, the bright star of the banqueters.

All which, and the abounding grace and love
Shown him by Saladin, a little held
The heart of Torel from its Lombard home
With Dame Adalieta: but it chanced
He sat beside the king in audience,
And there came one who said, "Oh, Lord of lords,
That galley of the Genovese which sailed
With Frankish prisoners is gone down at sea."
"Gone down!" cried Torel. "Ay! what recks it, friend,
To fall thy visage for?" quoth Saladin;
"One galley less to ship-stuffed Genoa!"
"Good my liege!" Torel said, "it bore a scroll
Inscribed to Pavia, saying that I lived;
For in a year, a month, and day, not come,
I bade them hold me dead; and dead I am,
Albeit living, if my lady wed,
Perchance constrained." "Certes," spake Saladin,
"A noble dame—the like not won, once lost—
How many days remain?" "Ten days, my prince,
And twelvescore leagues between my heart and me:
Alas! how to be passed?" Then Saladin—
"Lo! I am loath to lose thee,—wilt thou swear
To come again if all go well with thee,

Or come ill speeding?" "Yea, I swear, my king,
Out of true love," quoth Torel, "heartfully."
Then Saladin, "Take here my signet-seal;
My admiral will loose his swiftest sail
Upon its sight; and cleave the seas, and go
And clip thy dame, and say the Trader sends
A gift, remindful of her courtesies."
Passed were the year, and month, and day; and passed
Out of all hearts but one Sir Torel's name,
Long given for dead by ransomed Pavians:
For Pavia, thoughtless of her Eastern graves,
A lovely widow, much too gay for grief,
Made peals from half a hundred campaniles
To ring a wedding in. The seven bells
Of Santo Pietro, from the nones to noon,
Boomed with bronze throats the happy tidings out;
Till the great tenor, overswelled with sound,
Cracked itself dumb. Thereat the sacristan
Leading his swinkèd ringers down the stairs,
Came blinking into sunlight—all his keys
Jingling their little peal about his belt—
Whom, as he tarried, locking up the porch,
A foreign signor, browned with southern suns,

Turbaned and slippered, as the Muslims use,
Plucked by the cope. "Friend," spake he—'twas a
tongue
Italian true, but in an Arab mouth—
"Why are your belfries busy—is it peace
Or victory, that so ye din the ears
Of Pavian lieges?" "Truly, no liege thou!"
Grunted the sacristan, "who knowest not
That Dame Adalieta wed's to-night
Her fore-betrothed,—Sir Torel's widow she,
That died i' the chain?" "To-night!" the stranger
said:
"Ay, sir, to-night!—why not to-night?—to-night!
And you shall see a goodly Christian feast
If so you pass their gates at even-song,
For all are asked."

No more the questioner,
But folded o'er his face the Eastern hood,
Lest idle eyes should mark how idle words
Had struck him home. "So quite forgot!—so soon!—
And this the square wherein I gave the joust,
And that the loggia, where I fed the poor;
And yon my palace, where—oh, fair! oh, false!—
They robe her for a bridal. Can it be?

Clean out of heart, with twice six flying moons,
The heart that beat on mine as it would break,
That faltered forty oaths. Forced! forced!—not false—
Well! I will sit, wife, at thy wedding-feast,
And let mine eyes give my fond faith the lie."

So, in the stream of gallant guests that flowed
Feastward at eve, went Torel; passed with them
The outer gates, crossed the great courts with them,
A stranger in the walls that called him lord.
Cressets and coloured lamps made the way bright,
And rose-leaves strewed to where within the doors
The master of the feast, the bridegroom, stood,
A-glitter from his forehead to his foot,
Speaking fair welcomes. He, a courtly sir,
Marking the Eastern guest, bespoke him sweet,
Prayed place for him, and bade them set his seat
Upon the dais. Then the feast began,
And wine went free as wit, and music died—
Outdone by merrier laughter:—only one
Nor ate nor drank, nor spoke nor smiled; but gazed
On the pale bride, pale as her crown of pearls,
Who sate so cold and still, and sad of cheer,
At the bride-feast.

But of a truth, Torel
Read the thoughts right that held her eyelids down,
And knew her loyal to her memories.
Then to a little page who bore the wine,
He spake, "Go! tell thy lady thus from me:
In mine own land, if any stranger sit
A wedding-guest, the bride, out of her grace,
In token that she knows her guest's good-will,
In token she repays it, brims a cup,
Wherefrom he drinking she in turn doth drink:
So is our use." The little page made speed
And told the message. Then that lady pale—
Ever a gentle and a courteous heart—
Lifted her troubled eyes and smiled consent
On the swart stranger. By her side, untouched,
Stood the brimmed gold; "Bear this," she said, "and pray
He hold a Christian lady apt to learn
A kindly lesson." But Sir Torel loosed
From off his finger—never loosed before—
The ring she gave him on the parting day;
And ere he drank, behind his veil of beard
Dropped in the cup the ruby, quaffed, and sent.—
So she, with sad smile, set her lips to drink;

And—something in the Cyprus touching them—
Glanced—gazed—the ring!—her ring!—Jove! how
she eyes
The wistful eyes of Torel!—how, heartsure,
Under all guise knowing her lord returned,
She springs to meet him coming!—telling all
In one great cry of joy.
Good Lord! the rout,
The storm of questions! stilled, when Torel spake
His name, and, known of all, claimed the Bride
Wife
Maugre the wasted feast, and woful groom.
All hearts save his were light to see Torel;
But Adalieta's lightest, as she plucked
The bridal-veil away. Something therein—
A lady's dagger—small, and bright, and fine—
Clashed out upon the marble. "Wherefore that?"
Asked Torel; answered she, "I knew you true;
And I could live, so long as I might wait;
But they—they pressed me hard! my days of grace
Ended to-night—and I had ended too,
Faithful to death, if so thou hadst not come.'



"God quit all gentle lovers," sighed she,
"And give them grace for their constancy,
For, dost thou not, from Boccace, show
That true-love ever makes true-love so?
Peace have they now in that changeless rest
Where he is gone, whom thou lovest best,
The Master of poets, whose own words prove
It 'never ran smooth,' the 'course of love!'
Since this is Stratford, and yonder wave
Is lilied Avon's, which girdles his grave!"

So came we, two of one heart and age
Making our pious pilgrimage!

1856.

"Students' Day" in the National Gallery.



OUT of all the hundred fair Madonnas
Seen in many a rich and distant city—
Sweet Madonnas, with the mother's bosoms;
Sad Madonnas, with the eyes of anguish;
Rapt Madonnas, caught in clouds to heaven
(Clouds of golden, glad, adoring Angels)—
She of Florence, in the chair,—so perfect!
She that was the "Grand Duke's" wealth and glory,
She that makes the picture "of the Goldfinch,"
Ghirlandajo's, with the cloak and jewels;
Guido's Queen, whom men and angels worship
Della Robbia's best; and that sweet "Perla"—
Seville's bright boast—Mary of Murillo
(Painted—so they vow—"with milk and roses");
Guido Reni's Quadro at Bologna,
Munich's masterpiece, grim Dürer's Goddess;
Yes! and thy brave work—Beltraffio mio!—

Many as the lessons are I owe them,
Thanks and wonder; worship; grateful memories,
Oftenest I shall think of Perugino's.

Do you know it? Either side a triptych
Stands an armed Archangel—as to guard her—
Glorious—with great wings, and shining armour:
In the middle panel, pure and tender,
Clasping close her hands, with adoration
(All the Mother's love—the Mortal's worship—
In their yearning, in their reverence, painted),
Gazes Mary on the Child. A seraph
Holds Him, smiling, at her knees; and, smiling,
Looks she down, with spirit humbly-happy,
Full—to heart's brim—of the Peace of Heaven.
Reverence mingles with the Mother's passion,
But no touch of sadness, or of doubting.
Far away a river runneth seaward
(Little now—like Truth—like Truth, to widen),
Leads the light across a blue dim country,
Under peaks—by forests—to the ocean:
Soft and warm, a pearly sky broods over
Where three Winged-Ones, at the Father's footstool,
Sing the "peace and good-will" song to mortals.

If you ask me why that Perugino
Of the rest can never be forgotten,
Let this serve: I learned a lesson by it,
Watching one whose light and faithful fingers—
Following touch by touch her lovely labour—
Caught the Master's trick, and made him modern.
While she bent above her new Madonna,
Laid the splendid smalts, and touched the crimsons,
Swept the shadows under the gilt tresses,
Smoothed the sinless brows, and drooped the eye-
lids,—
What the Master did, so also doing,—
I bethought me, "True and good the toil is!
Noble thus to double gifts of beauty!
Yet, alas! this 'peace and good-will' anthem,—
If the dear Madonna knew what ages—
Slowly following ages—would creep o'er us,
And those words be still as wind that passes,
Breathing fragrance from a land we know not,
Sighing music to a tune we catch not,
Stirring hearts, as leaves, i' the night, a little
Shake, and sleep again, and wait for sunlight
(Sweet, glad sunlight! oh, so long a-coming!),
Would she smile so? I had painted rather

(While she listened to those singing Angels)—
Mary, with a sword-blade in her bosom
(Sword that was to pierce her heart, of all hearts!)
I had shown her with deep eyes of trouble,
Half afraid to credit that Evangel;
I had limned her 'pondering all those sayings,'
All our later agonies foreseeing,
After all our years have heard 'the tidings.'"

But the Artist, painting bold and largely,
Washing soft and clear the broadening colours;
With a liberal brush, at skilful working,
Linking lights and shadows on the visage,
Dropped by hazard there, one drop of water!
"Lo, a tear!" I thought; "that teaches Pietro!
That is wiser than the Master's wisdom!
Now the picture's meaning will be perfect!
For she could not be so calm—Christ's Mother—
Could she? even though Archangels kept her!
Could she? even though those sang in Heaven!
Knowing how her world would roll beyond them,
Twenty centuries past this sacred moment,
Out of sound of this angelic singing;
Loaded with the wrongs Christ's justice rights not,

Reddened with the blood Christ's teachings stanch not,
Reeking with the tears Christ's pity stays not:
Let the tear shine there! it suits the story!
Tear and smile go wondrous well together!
Seeing that this song was sung by Angels;
Seeing that the foolish world gainsays it.
That one lustrous drop completes the picture!
You forgot it! Peter of Perugia!"

Ah! I did not know an Artist's wisdom!
I had still to learn my deepest lesson:
She I watched, with better thought inspired,
Took some tender colour in her pencil
(Faint dawn-colour,—blush of rose,—I marked not!),
Touched the tear, and melted it to brightness,
Spread it in a heavenly smile all over
Magically made it turn to service;
Till that tear, charged with its rosy tintings,
Deepened the first sweet smile, and left it lovelier,—
Like the Master's work, complete, sufficient!

Then I thought: "Pietro's wise Madonna
Was too wise to weep at little sorrows!

Christ, and She, and Heaven, and all the angels
Last;—'tis sin, and grief, alone which passes!
Roses grow of dew, and smiles from weeping!
Sweetest smile is made of saddest tear-drop!
She hath not forgotten we shall suffer!
In her heart that sword—to the heft—is planted,
But beyond the years, she sees Time over;
Past the Calvary she counts 'the mansions.'
Dear Madonna!—wise to be so happy!
Should you weep, because we have not listened?
We shall listen! and His Mother knows it!"

This is why—of many rare Madonnas—
Most of all I think on Perugino's;
I who know so many more and love them!
This is why I thank my gentle artist,
She who taught me that, a student's wisdom!

1868.

The Knight's Tomb at Swanscombe Church.



WHERE, through western windows, dieth—
  Gold and rose—the sunset's light,
With his dame, in marble, lieth
  Andrew Weldon, armèd Knight:
Side by side, the legend sayeth,
  These two lived and died:
Seemeth it most fair and fit
  To rest so, side by side.

Nothing here, above or under,
  Of fanatic gloom!
No fool's fear of death's deep wonder
  Spoils their simple tomb:
Seemeth the sculptor carved it
  Only for to show

What the Lady and the Knight were
Now they are not so.

Silvery twitters of swift swallows
Reach them, flashing by;
Shadows of the spear-leaved sallows
On their foreheads lie,
Shadows of the flickering sallows,
Of the fragrant limes,
Waving to-day as green and gay
As in their vanished times.

Fair, be sure, was this great lady,
Eyes, I guess, whose blue,
Cold and calm, but beaming steady,
Tender shone and true.
Certes! of a noble presence,
Dutiful and staid,
Worthinesse was glad before her,
Worthlessnesse dismayed.

Read beneath, in golden letters
Proudly written down,

Names of all her "sonnes and daughteres!"
  Each a matron-crown:
Deftly carved in ruff and wimple,
  Kneeling figures show
Small heads over smaller, rising
  In a solemn row.

These her triumphs: sterner token
  Chronicles her Lord?
Hangs above him, grim and broken,
  Gilded helm,—and sword:
Sometimes, when with choir and organ
  All the still air swings,
Red with the rust, and grey with the dust,
  Low rattles the blade, and rings.

Time was, Knight, that tiny treble
  Should have stirred thy soul
More than drums and trumpets rebel
  Braying after Noll:
No more fight, now!—nay, nor flight, now!
  The rest which thou hast given
In chancel-shade to yon good blade
  God gives thy soul in Heaven.

Somewhere on this summer morning
  In this English isle,
Gleams a cheek whose soft adorning,
  Lady! wears thy smile!
Some one in the Realm, whose fathers
  Suffered much and long,
Owes that sword and its good Lord
  Thanks for a righted wrong.

Therefore for that maiden pray I
  Dame! God thee assoil!
Therefore for that freeman say I
  Knight! God quit thy toil!
And for all Christian men—and me—
  Grace from the gracious Lord
To write our name with no more shame,
  And sheathe as clean a sword.

June 1857.

Alla Mano Della Mia Donna.



Listen! poets, loving-hearted,
Here abiding—hence departed:
Ye who ranged the realms above
Seeking symbols of your love;
Provence bards and Persian Saadis
Eloquently lauding ladies;
Frauenlob—the Minnesinger
Mourned of maidens—and that bringer
Of delight to camp and grove,
Camoens, the Lord of love;
Praise as proudly as ye list,
All the honeyed lips ye kissed:
Vaunt your true loves' violet eyes
Vow them bluer than the skies;
Swear no south-wind ever came
Sweet and soft as she you name;

Nor no lily ever grew
White as that which bloomed for you!
Look I fling you down a glove
In one dear name that I love—
Never hand so fair and fine
As my lady's—Katharine.

Yes! I know it—Father Homer!
Too long in thy rolls a roamer
Not to know how radiant-mighty
Rose the sea-born Aphrodite;
Yes! I know the pearly splendour
Of that hand, whose curvings tender,
Silver glinting under gold,
Combed away the sea-foam bold.
And I worship, bending low,
Herë's awful arm of snow;
And of mortal boldness shorn
Hail the Rosy-fingered Morn;
But those Gods above the thunder
Are for fear and reverent wonder;
She whose gentle hand I praise
Woman is, with woman's ways,

And I hold this gage of mine
None a hand—like Katharine.

All the bards that lips have kissed
Enter angry on the list,
And the legions that appear,
Might move any heart to fear.
Lo! Athenian Sophocles—
Virgil, too, my fancy sees—
And I sink my spear-head bright
As beseemeth younger knight;
And I kneel, but not to yield,
For I keep the tented field—
Vowing no such hand was seen
Were Electra twice a Queen,
And Lavinia's hue as fair
As 'twas bragged in Latin air:
Nay, nor falter for Sibylla,
Or the careless-eyed Camilla,
Though her wounded wrist did shine
Likest "ivory, stained with wine."
Let them go, my noble Masters,
With a sigh for Love's disasters,

And the challenge—none so fine!
None a hand—like Katharine.

Dante! spirit sad and lone!
Laughing love thou hast not known;
Weeping love attends on thee,
With its mortal mystery;
And thine Angel, Beatrice,
Aweth with her hand of ice.
Thou, Petrarca! dost thou frown?
Lay thy latest sonnet down!
Set thy shining lance in rest!
For I tilt upon thy breast:
Say'st thou, "like a curving shell,
Where the tender pink does dwell,"
Gleamed thy Laura's milky hand?
Lo! I read it! and I stand
Firm of foot to make it seem,
Even so my Love's doth gleam;
And this gentle hand of mine
Gave a heart—thus did not thine.

Ah! Dan Chaucer!—art thou he,
Morning star of minstrelsy?

Eldest of the English choir,
Highest hill—touched first with fire.
Pass! no bow of mine is bent
At the heart where I have leant,
And thy dream of Marguerite
Was but vision of my Sweet.

Next to thee what champions come?
There be valorous poets some—
Other some whose steel I scorn
In unknightly hands yborne;
At the last a Minstrel proud
Rideth high amid the crowd,
Knight of Lady Una he,
And I do him courtesy;
Yet though "whiter than the snow
Gleamed that noble Dame, I trow,
White as snow and therewith warm
Is my Lady's loving arm;
And not golden Oriana,
Nor maid Amoret's high manner,
Waved a hand as white and fine
As the hand of Katharine.

Com'st thou, Tasso, with thy crew,
Eastern-aired Armida too?
Oh! a lustrous lady she,
"Beautiful, exceedingly;"
But her Asian soul I doubt,
Looking from those large eyes out;
And her white wrist plays a part,
Beating not as beats her heart.
Hence, Enchantress! hence, too, thou
Mistress of the southern brow;
Though thou be'st Boccaccio's best,
"Bocca bacciata" hath no zest!
After thee there floats another
Like as sister of one mother,
Ariosto's Angelique,—
Hide her hand, and hide her cheek!
Let a nobler Dame have life
Led by nobler knight to strife—
High born, great, and graceful too,
All thy loving songs were true;
Swear, Lord Surrey, stoutly swear,
Was never woman half so fair!
And I will swear that Geraldine
Had no such hand as Katharine.

ALLA MANO DELLA MIA DONNA.

Nay! high poets, let it be
Thine to thee, and mine to me;
For I see th' accepted King
Of all earthly minstrelling
Crowned with homely Avon lilies,
As his regal way and will is.
Mighty Master! hear me speak:
Though Queen Cleopatra's cheek
Shamed the rosy lotus-dyes,
And her hand in Antony's
Whiter than dove's milky wing
Lay, a plaything for a King;
Yet an thou shalt pardon yield,
Thus I leave the foughten field;
All as fair and yet more true
Than was known to one but you,
Is that fair frank hand of mine
That gave to me Katharine.

January 1856.

The Hymn of the Priestess of Diana.



Oh, of all maidens Mistress! Help at need
Of souls unstained and bosoms virginal!
With vervain and with fragrant gums we feed
The flame that burned, and burns, and ever shall;
Feed thou the fire that flames with holy thought,
And let the world to thy white shrine be brought.

The altar-light, mounting to find thy face,
Gleams back upon us from the brow divine,
Filling with placid splendour all the place:
Fill so the earth, supremest Goddess mine!
That men, awaking out of fancied light,
May know it, matched with Dian's noon-time—
night.

O brow, where shame can never come to sit!
O cheek of snow, which blush can never melt!

O ear, that hears no word or wish unfit!
O breast, which thought unsainted never felt!
Show thyself, Dian! unto other eyes
As unto ours, thy deep-sworn votaries.

For we, who round about thine altar go,
Thou Daughter of the Father of the world!
Know thee divinest;—if men knew thee so,
Then were the false gods from their temples hurled;
And mortals, leaving blind and sinful yearning,
Should scorn false beauty, beauty true discerning.

Queen of the quiet sky!—the night's full Moon!
Be moon! and pierce the darkness of this cloud,
Whereunder wander, in a dreamful swoon,
The fellows of our blood, a witless crowd;
Send thou the silver ray that lightens this;
Show them the path which goes by good to bliss.

Huntress of noble harts,—high-purposed Maid!
Whose sandal tied for free and fearless chase
Is fairer than the cestus proud, displayed
By her of Cyprus,—stand in pride of place

Before the eyes of men, and lead them on
To hunt beside thee, turning off for none.

Ah, bliss! beside thee—by thee—in thy spirit—
The chase of life along the years to lead,
Conquering desire by high desire to merit
The joy of joys, the love of loves, the meed
Of untold grace, waiting th' unshaken faith
Firm held through life, in full repose on death,

For Thou, of all the gods, hast these to give,—
The kingdom of a calm and equal mind,
The kiss—cold, true—bidding the soul's life live
To meet caresses, tarrying yet behind,
But past hope tender, like the dreams the moon
Left on the forehead of Endymion.

Eheu! we speak of things we cannot know,
And knowing, in this presence we were dumb;
But on the winds which round thy portal go
Echoes from Aphrodite's revels come,
Marring our hymns. High Goddess! make men see
The "Foam-Born's" beauty but a blot to thee.

To a Sleeping Lady.

DARLING! as you lie there sleeping, with the holy
angels keeping
Watch and ward around your pillow, shading it
with wings of gold;
Sentinels whose happy duty is to guard your grace
and beauty;
While you lie there dreaming, seeming all your
sweet self, chaste and cold;
Who would think that the true treasure of that
casket—beyond measure
Rich, and fair, and finished—is not where the
lovely casket lies?
That they see the palace-portal set ajar, and the
Immortal
Gone forth from its rosy gateway, locking satin
lids on eyes?

Yet so is it! Fairest woman! and what's there is but the human
Robe and raiment which your spirit wears, to walk with all the rest,
Regal raiment! ah, the silky wavelets of that hair! the milky
Whiteness of the brow! the neck! the soft hands folded o'er the breast!
As a Queen's grace seems to linger in the pearl-strings which her finger
Loosens—so thy soul leaves glory on that sleeping form of thine;
But the beautiful still body is not that which most I worship,
And your soul, my Pride! my Bride!—is here, and talking low with mine.

All because at such an hour, Love hath so much charm and power,
Life hath so much deeper knowledge of its march and mystery,
That—so soon as I invite it—coy no longer, but delighted

Forth thy sweet and stately spirit comes for fellow-
ship with me!
And, beside my spirit sitting, thoughts with deep
thoughts interknitting,
Speaking plainly in a silence, clearer, dearer far
than speech,
Mine grows all thine inmost being; and I see thee
more than seeing—
I and thou as one together; blended, ended, each
in each.

To Stella.

SWEET Soul! suddenly met, utterly loved,
  At the first glance of our unlooked-for meeting!
I gaze back on the ways whereby I moved
  To this fair fate, my lonely life completing:
I did not seek you, Dear! no vision tender
  Bade me expect you on my rayless road!
There was no dreamy dawning of the splendour
  Your white light sheds! no morning grey that showed
Where my Star waited under life's horizon!—
  Ah, fair, pure, silvery Star! set not again!
Better no lamp to fix the sailors' eyes on
  Than one brief beam cast on the cold dark main!

1866

Inscribed upon a Skull picked up on the Acropolis at Athens.

I AM the skull of Nedjm, a Turk,
  Who fought at Athens with the Giaour;
When cannon-balls were hard at work
  Shattering the Parthenon—that hour
A classic fragment took me fair
  Under the waist-cloth, and so made
"Ruins" of me. For long years there
  My remnants with the rest have laid.
Scant burial got we from the Greek—
  The green fly and the hooded crow
Helped the hot sun to leave me sleek,
  Till, as thou seest, my pate did grow
White as new Parian. At the last
  A Briton spied me, as he passed,
Roaming the strewed Acropolis,
  And lightly fashioned me to this.

Drink! if thou wilt; and, drinking, say
  Never did ancient craftsman make
Cyathus, Krater, Patera
  Fitter a mighty thirst to slake.
But, call me not a thing of the clod!
  The Parthenon owned no such plan!
Man made that temple for a God,
  God made these temples for a man!

1875.

The New Lucian.

[To H. D. Traill, Esq., on the Dedication of his book, "The New Lucian."]

"At that eternal parting of the ways,"
Thou say'st, good Friend! looking to see it come
When hands which cling unclasp, arms disembrace,
And lips, that murmured love to lips, are dumb.
Ay! it will come,—the bitter hour!—but bringing
A better life beyond, more subtle-sweet;
A higher road to tread, with happier singing,
And no cross-ways to part familiar feet!
Smil'st thou, my later Lucian! knowing too well
Hope's under-ache, Faith's fallacies all sped?
Yet that which gave thee thy fair gift, to tell
How in Elysium chat th' unsilenced Dead,
Shall some day whisper; "Lo! the Life Immortal!
Enter! for thee wide stands the golden portal!"

Oxford Revisited.

MOTHER! mild Mother! after many years—
  So many that the head I bow turns grey—
  Come I once more to thee, thinking to say
In what far lands, through what hard hopes and fears,
'Mid how much toil and triumph, joys and tears,
  I taught thy teaching; and, withal, to lay
  At thy kind feet such of my wreaths as may
Seem least unworthy. But what grown child dares
Offer thee honours, Fair and Queenly One!
  Tower-crowned, and girdled with thy silver streams.
Mother of ah! so many a better son?
  Let me but list thy solemn voice, which seems
    Like Christ's, raising my dead: and let me be
    Back for one hour—a Boy—beside thy knee.

May 1883.

A Duet.



He.

"Ah!—if you knew! if I dared to discover
  Half that my heart feels to-day:
If there were words for so faithful a lover,
  Soft enough, fond enough,—say!
Would you be vexed at my passionate pleading!
  Would you believe it was true?
How would the beautiful eyes look,—conceding?
  Rebuking? Oh, Sweet! if you knew!"

She.

"How can I know, when a glance of relenting
  Stays the rash whisper, half-said?
How can I know when,—while I am consenting—
  'No' is the sentence you dread?

Sometimes—I think I should never believe you,
  Sometimes—my thought—is not so;
If you say nothing, no answer can grieve you,
  Only then—what can I know?"

The Altar of Pity.

[From the "Thebais" of Statius.]

In the mid-city—to no mighty God
Dedicate—rose an altar. Pity built
Her gentle seat there, and the miserable
Made all its consecration: never lacked
That Altar suppliants! none are turned away!
Whoso doth ask is heard; for day and night
The shrine stands open, and the offering
Of woful wail is free. A frugal faith!
No spice-fed flames burn there! no costly blood
Is shed: with tears—salt tears—the marble reeks.
No image soars above, no bronze hath ta'en
Stamp of the Deity! She loves to dwell
Deep in the thoughts,—hid in the aching heart;
And ever hath she trembling worshipper
And ever is the spot thick with a throng
Sad-faced; the happy only know it not!

The Cholera in Italy.

[Suggested by a sketch of Sir John Millais, R.A., representing a skeleton shooting an arrow by night into the habitations of a fortified town.]

How did it come to his mind? the fleshless and
 horrible dream—
Grewsome, cruel, and weird—making the murk more
 grim;
Standing stark-naked in bone, which the starlight
 sets all a-gleam—
Shooting his shot at the town, the little town silent
 and dim?

Said we not, each to the other, "Death is an Angel
 of Light!"
While our tears as they rolled gave the lie to our
 lips?

Here's one paints us the thing awful, authentic, aright—
Tells the Truth straight out, from the skull to the spiked toe-tips!

So, if you opened this page an idle moment to soothe,
Madam! or Sir!—as may be—best close the volume for good;
Here's no matter to flatter flesh and blood in their youth!
Here's an Artist in earnest—Death's picture on worm-eaten wood!

But if you ask what he meant, yonder the Tuscan town lies
Under the curtains of midnight, spangled with planet and star,
All looking down so calm! so splendid! as if the eyes
Of numberless Angels were watching our one little world from afar.

And I hear on the rampart-stones the heel of the
sentinel ring;
And I see him halt and count the chimes of the
midnight bell,
And he listens towards us here;—"But 'tis only
the cicalas sing!"
And he shoulders his musket again, and passes the
word, "All's well!"

And away, within those walls, I know there is
pleasure and pain;
(Ah me! the sorrows and joys wherewith one town
may be fraught!)
There's scented smoke from the censers, where the
people pray in vain,
And a flare from the pharos-lantern to bring the
feluccas to port.

And I seem to see in the gleam which hangs all
over the town,
Cresset lights of a banquet, and merry torch-bearers
who go—

Their jolly feet false with the wine—in laughter up
and down,
With rose-crowns awry on their heads—and cornets
that cheerily blow.

Ah, and I know that, beneath the beautiful roof of
the night,
Bridal-couches are spread, and lovers at last are
one,
Who say, "If God would will that it never more
should be light,
Then stay on the other side, and wait till we wish
for thee, Sun!"

Laughter, and music, and banquets, and roses, and
revelry,
And prayers in the churches to please the Keeper
of heaven and hell,
And the ships with spices and bales ploughing
bravely in from the sea,
And still that sentinel looks from the wall and
cries, "All's well!"

Doth he not mark, close by, this spectre we mark so
plain,
Who blisters the growing grass with the bones of
his clattering feet?
Who makes the still air reek with the fester of live
things slain,
And turns to corpse-light, on his skull, the starlight
holy and sweet?

Cannot he hear the Voice—still—small—that comes
with this Thing?
Drives it, striding along; halts it, elbows and
knees,
Says to the skeleton bowman, "Now fit thy shaft
to the string,
Shoot me a shot at the town; for the hour is come
to these!"

Cursed Bowman! who shoot'st with an arrow dipped
in the pest!
Maker of all! Whose will is good, though Thou
willest we die!

It is changed in that little town from joy at its gayest and best,
To cramps that curdle the blood, and tortures that glaze the eye.

The sentinel, careless of all, stalks quiet upon the wall;
But the pilot has yielded the helm of his vessel with a scream:
At the banquet the guests drop dead; the worshippers—priests, and all,
Fly! ere they chant "Amen;"—and that sweet bridal dream,

Which the lovers dreamed together—but half asleep—while their lips
Still kissed, for fear lest a minute from love's brief rapture be took—
Is ended in this, that one from the arms of the other slips,
And that other—chilled by the corpse—turns corpse herself, at a look.

Ah, Thou Lord, Thou God! Who sendest this pestilent wraith!
Giver of life, Who hast given the instinct to love to live,
Teach us another lesson—to render it back in faith,
When the messenger comes like this, with a ghastly message to give.

Ah, Thou Lord, Thou God! our hearts are the homes in the town:
At the twanging of that black bow, ill fare they who there do dwell;
But help our souls to hear, through the darkness that settles down,
Thy sentinel on the wall, crying always to all, "All's well!"

The Wreck of the "Northern Belle."

Fair sight! for a crew
Of Englishmen true,
When homeward their course they hold,
With sails bleached white
By the tropic light,
And sheathing a-glitter like gold;
Fair sight! from the rails,
—When the Topman hails
"Land ho! on the larboard!"—to see
The green waves leap
At the white cliff's steep
On the shore of the land of the free:—
Fair music they make together,
The cliff and the climbing foam;
And it sounds in the bright blue weather
Like the wanderer's welcome home.

But when the east wind howleth,
And the great seas rise and rave,
Another sight
Is that belt of white,
And another sound's on the wave!
Small welcome for wildered vessel,
When the billows, giant and grey,
Break—sworn on the sand
Her keel to strand,
And her ribs on the rocks to lay!
Oh! the silver gates of your island
Were liker the gates of hell,
In the mist of that winter morning
To the crew of the "Northern Belle."

We left New York for London,
(And the wind left with us too!)
We thrashed our way
Through Atlantic spray,
And ran the Channel through;
'Twas three on the morning of Monday
When we let the anchors go
Ten cables, or more,
From Kingsgate shore,

To ride out the storm and snow;
Ten cables from where green meadows,
And quiet homes could be seen,
  No greater space
  From peril to peace—
But the savage sea between!

  Yet a greater space
  To us had been grace,
For still as we neared the shore,
The wild white roll of the waves on the shoal
Roared round us more and more;
Roared out, in a ring around us,
You might see them fore and aft,
  On ragged ledge,
  And splintered edge,
All mad to dash our craft;
While the weltering rocks,
With their sea-weed locks
Awash in the whirling froth,
  Stood up like slaves
  Of the winds and waves,
Waiting to wreak their wrath

Not yet, brave ship!
For the anchor's grip
Is fast in the ooze and shell;
The gusts may shake,
And the great surge break,
But the iron holds her well.
If a smith could tell,
As his sledge-hammer fell,
That each little link should hold
The craft and the crew,
And their lives' hope too,
His strokes would be strong and bold!
Ease, ease, mad strain!
Hold, hold, good chain!
We freshened the hawse once more;
'Twas ten of the day,
And the vessel lay
Stern on to the snow-dimmed shore.

And now from the town
They hurry down,
For the cry is "A Wreck!" "A Wreck!"
(Ah! under their tread
Is the firm green mead,

'Neath ours but the slippery deck).
Kind souls! they shout!
Look! yonder comes out
A lugger from off the land,
Brave crew and craft!—
Ready fore and aft!—
She will lend us a helping hand:
'Bout ship! so, so!
She stays,—yes! no!
Port, port! ah Heaven! that sea—
Gone—vessel and men
While the heart beats ten!
Gone,—drowned, for their charity!

Rose from each lip
On shore, and ship,
A cry, a groan, a prayer;
While the nine hearts brave
Went under the wave,
And their death-cry hung in air;
No seaman but felt
His man's heart melt;—
But the masts were down ere now

And the raffle and wreck,
Scarce clear of the deck,
Hung, fouling the larboard bow;
So we shouted at last,
"Clear away that mast
Or else we are ill bested!
God take those home!
When our turn's come
The dead can bury the dead."

Thus, all that day,
In snow and spray,
For dear life still we toiled;
And faint and few
The bold words grew
As nearer the breakers boiled;
And still, like a steed,
Reined back at speed,
The ship did plunge and rear;
While the burly main
Strove on in vain
To crack our cable and gear:
Till the twilight gloom,
Like the earth on the tomb,

Came over, and hid the town;
And the last we could see,
They were busy a-lee
Dragging the life-boats down.

Ah me! no boat
In that surf could float,
No oarsmen cleave a way;
No eye so bright
As to pierce the night
That on land and water lay:
Oh! leaden dark!
Which left no spark
Of star, in the wild wet sky,
Not one pale ray
To glimmer and say
That God and help were nigh.
The timbers racked,
The cables cracked,
Wilder the waters dashed;
Ease her!—no need!
The ship is freed!
She drove,—she rose,—she crashed!

Then settled and fell
The "Northern Belle,"
As one who no more strives;
But the foremast stood,
Good Canada wood,
With nine and twenty lives:
If dreadful the day
As none could say,
Oh! the night was terribler far,
As each man clung
To the shrouds, or hung
Ice-cold, on the icy spar;
And hearts beat slow,
As the hours did go,
Like a lazily-ticking clock;
Till we longed to drop
From the dripping top
Nor wait for the last sure shock.

Then, while she did grind,
We called to mind
Each one, his own home-place,
New Jersey towns,
And Connecticut downs,

And the pleasant meadows of maize:
We thought of brothers,
And wives and mothers,
With whom we should never be;
Of our babies playing,
Or perhaps a prayer saying
For "daddy," far off at sea;
And *we* said prayers
To mingle with theirs,
And held for the daylight still,
Which came anon,
When hope was gone,
As God's best mercies will.

For, soon as the clouds,
Like great grey shrouds,
Let out the Lazarus-light,
We looked to land
And saw on the sand,
Good God! a cheery sight;—
Seven noble men
(Christ save them, then!)
That would not see us drown,

With oars in hand,
And the life-boat manned,
(The life-boat dragged from the town;)
And they gave us a cheer
We could plainly hear,
Which we answered with aching throat:
Ah then! dear life!
To watch the strife
Between the storm and the boat.

More strong and steep
The waves did leap
For every stroke she made;
As they were bound
To see us drowned,
And would not be gainsayed:
"Now, now! ah now!
Pull bow! pull bow!
Oh! yonder swells a sea,
She swamps!—no! no!
Thank God, not so!
She rounds beneath our lee,"
—Thrice with a freight
Of lives they fight

Their way—stern down and stem—
Then—safe and sound,
On the English ground!
Thanks to the Lord, and them.

Look ye, mates mine!
There be stories fine
Of Greek and Roman deed;
But when all's done
There was never one
Of better help at need.
Which man of our crew,
My messmates true,
But holds his life a gift
From those brave Seven,
Henceforward, please Heaven,
To be used with thoughtful thrift!
To be held on earth
For service of worth,
Save when Englishmen cry—and then
Come storm, come slaughter,
To be spent like water
For the sake of the Kingsgate men.

There are those at home,
When the news is come,
Will crowd to hear of the ship,
With great tears rounding,
And glad hearts bounding,
And blessings a-pant on the lip.
There are girls there, plenty,
Not come to twenty,
Too shy and demure to speak,
Real ladies,—would kiss
For love of this,
Each man of that crew on his cheek:
Ay! count it grand
To touch but a hand
Of the Seven, who staked their lives,
Lost seamen to save
From a cold sea-grave,
And send them to sisters and wives.

I'll say one thing
Before I bring
This plain sea-song to its end,
Such hearts of gold,
More than state-craft old,

Will help all quarrels to mend.
America sent,
With warm intent,
Your ship for a new-year's token,
You give her back
Our lives from wrack,
Shall such friends ever be broken?
No! no! they shall stand
Hand fast in hand,
All sisterly—side by side—
And none ever tell
Of the "Northern Belle,"
But with flushes and smiles of pride.

Yet more's to do,—
That first boat's crew
In this verse shall be given,
That Yankee boys
With a ready voice
May say the list of the Seven.
The men I write
In the "Mary White,"
GEORGE CASTLE'S boat, did go—

John, Castle's brother,
George Fox, another,
Ned Emptage and Jem Rowe—
Those gallant five
Did save alive
Our crew from the "Northern Belle,"
With Robert Miller
And William Hiller

I have no more to tell.

Hastings, *Jan.* 23, 1857.

A Home Song.

THE swallow is come from his African home
  To build on the English eaves ;
The Sycamore wears all his glistering spears,
  And the Almond rains roseate leaves ;
And—dear Love ! — with thee, as with bird and with tree,
  'Tis the time of blossom and nest,
Then, what good thing of the bountiful Spring
  Shall I liken to thee—the best ?

Over the streamlet the rose-bushes bend
  Clouded with tender green,
And green the buds grow upon every bough,
  Though as yet no rose-tint is seen ;
Like those, thou art come to thy promise of bloom,
  Like theirs, thine shunneth the light ;
Break, rose-bud !—and let a longing heart know
  If the blossom be red or white !

Up the broad river with swelling sails,
A glorious vessel goes,
And not more clear in the soft blue air
Than in the still water she shows!
Dost thou not go with as brave a show,
And, sooth, with as swelling a state?
Oh, come into harbour with that thou bear'st,
Dear ship!—for I eagerly wait.

Fair ship!—ah, Kate! none beareth a freight
As precious and rich as thine,
And where's the rose-bush that will burgeon and blush
With a blossom like thine and mine?
—Well! well!—we do, as the meadow birds too,
Since meadows with gold were dyed,
The hen sits at rest in the hidden nest,
And her mate sings glad at her side.

SWANSCOMBE, *April* 1857.

Fond Fancies.

FOND fancies, past the telling,
Come o'er me—idly spelling
The mystic meanings dwelling
In what these Hindoos taught;
So fast they rise—and faster,
That I bid them over-master
Slow study;—and far past her
Carry my willing thought!

Carry my thoughts, confessing
Each dear and separate blessing,
(Ah! how beyond expressing,
Except with eyes, sweet wife!)
Each help, from Love's hid heaven,
That thy gentle soul has given
To a soul else overdriven
In the eager race of life.

Sweetheart! how dull beside them
Seems all that would outpride them!
How weak, what may betide them
To bring to fall or fear
This joy to live together
In changeless summer weather!
No clouds to gloom or gather!
No seasons in our year!

Past all weak words the pleasure,
The luxury, the treasure,
Of knowing without measure
Our fondness fully-grown;
So that love, no more careful,
Nor fanciful, nor fearful,
Takes—heart, and eye, and ear-full—
The love that is its own!

Let go, old legends! sweeter
Than fruit of lotus-eater,
Diviner and completer,
Than Circe's anodyne;

To lessen sadness sent us,
And to double gladness lent us,
The true, unpressed, nepenthos
Is true love's honey-wine!

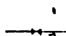
Let go the pride of learning,
The foolishness of spurning
Life's life, for large discerning
Of vain philosophies!
"The highest truth lies nearest!"
'Twas a Greek said it, Dearest!
Of sages the sincerest,
Grey old Pheidippides!

And let go that wild battle
Which tempts us, with its rattle
To join—like June-mad cattle,
In sinful strife for place!
The sin is not worth sinning;
The end mocks the beginning;
The only prize worth winning
Is ours, without the race!

Therefore, when fears do fret me,
Whenever wild winds threat me,
I fold my sails and get me
To the harbour of thy breast;
Safe there from outer riot,
Like a bird whom fierce hawks fly at,
Escaped, and brooding quiet
Down in his happy nest!

June 1860.

On a Dead Lady.



Non può far Morte il dolce viso amaro,
Ma 'l dolce viso dolce può far Morte.

Death cannot change her face, tender and fair!
'Tis she who changes Death, and makes him dear.

Lydia.

[From Horace, written to a Danish air.]



HE.

As long as I was dear to you, and none—
        Not one, save I—
Dared lock his arms about your neck, the Sun
Saw no King happier underneath the sky.

SHE.

As long as you loved Lydia more than all,
        And Chloe's face
Had not made Lydia's nought, men might me call
The happiest girl of all the Roman race.

HE.

Well! now, that's past! and Chloe binds my heart
        With lute and voice;
Whom so I love that, if Death's fatal dart,
Aimed at her life, struck mine, I should rejoice.

SHE.

Ah! yes—'tis past! I love a Thurian boy,
Who dotes on me;
And for his dear sake I would die with joy,
Nay, or twice over—were the thing to be.

HE.

But—just suppose the old love could come back
As good as new!
That Chloe with her golden hair should pack,
And my heart open all its gates to you!

SHE.

Supposing that—oh! well!—my Thurian's dear,
And you—alas!
Are wild as Adria, and more light than air,
Yet, Love! with you life and dark Death I'd pass.

The Lost Pleiad.

A STORY OF THE STARS.



At the noon of a May night,
When the stars are all alight,
And the white moon wanders through the gray;
While softly over all
Sleep's velvet veil doth fall,
To shield tired eyes from the day;—

At such a night's noon
I watched the stars and moon
Till they and I alone did seem to be;
Till, in that silver throng
Sorely my soul did long
To rove at will, and many wonders see.

Wherefore I let it large,
And up from Earth's dim marge
It bounded like a horse with broken rein;
From the Dragon's flaming crest
To Orion's star-bound breast
It roamed upon that planet-studded plain.

On the broad flank of the Bear,
Dubhè flashed fierce and clear,
Lighting his glancing eyes and gleaming tusk;
And the Lion shook his mane,
And the great star-feathered Crane
Was up among his brothers of the dusk.

In the Northern Bull's bright van
I saw dread Aldebaran,
Andromeda's wild hair I saw a-flame;
By the Lyre's glittering strings,
Down through the Swan's white wings,
Unto a lovely, lonely light I came;

A cloud of splendour sent
Out on the firmament
As 'twere the breath of each light-laden star;

A stream of splendour seen
Broad in that sea of sheen,
Like Indian rivers flowing seaward far.

None other orbs did move
In such sweet show of love;
None shone like those 'mid the sky companies;
I knew the Sisters Seven
Were the light-bearers of Heaven,
Whom men do name the tearful Pleiades.

On each sphere's rolling rim
Each held an urn at brim,
And poured its molten silver down her world;
In which fair gift of light
Its live things took delight,
And she in them:—one orb alone was furled

In gloom; nor ray did send,
Save when the Six did bend
Their sister glances on the lonely One;
Whereat I could descry
A sad, mild Majesty,
Sitting unlighted on a lightless sun.

Why she alone of Seven
Nor gave nor took in Heaven
Heaven's gift and gladness—Heaven-filling light—
Why the Almighty wrath
Sent her that lampless path,
And dimmed her crown among the Queens of Night

I longed, and sought to hear;—
Oh, gather round and near,—
I know that starless Angel's story through;
It was not all a dream,
It did not wholly seem,—
Listen! I strike low strings! and tell it true.

Ah! Sisters Six, lead my dark star and me,
For I am Merope—blind Merope,
And I go shorn of light, who lighted all.
O splendent Sister Stars! gleam on my path,
And show me where it winds among the worlds;
Nor turn your glances hence, because I sit
And moan upon the story of my sin;
For I am Merope,—blind Merope,—

Merope,—light-abandoned Merope,
Who stood between God's lowest and God's love.

O thrice twain Sisters! lead my world along.
In the beginning when none was save He,
God flung from both great hands His star-seed forth
Over the endless meadows of the void;
Wherein, as in the grain the broad green blade,
Life lay, and life's high loves and happy ends;
And unto each He gave fit ministrant
And faithful warder. Some were kings of suns,
And dipped their cressets in the molten gold
That rippled round His throne; and other some
Fed on their borrowed glory, and were glad,
Frail spirits, shunning the full glance of God;
Some, with the vaporous wreaths they did bestride,
Faded or were illumed; and some at speed
Rode errant angels, singing thorough space,
Curbing the comets to their headlong course;
And unto some He gave a gentler gift,
To tend the lower worlds, and shine for them;
And unto us, his youngest-born, the Earth,
An ever-needing, never-ceasing care:
For chief He charged our Seven Sister-lights

To wax and wane above her, keeping aye
Mid station: and at noon and night, and ever,
To listen open-eared, and bear above
Unto His feet its children's cries and tears,—
For all tears that do fall, fall for God's ear.
Ai, ai! it was our charge—a gracious charge,
Ai, ai! I lost love's task unlovingly;
For I am Merope—blind Merope,
Merope,—light-abandoned Merope,
Who stood between God's lowest and God's love.

O Sisters Six! I follow plainingly,—
For I am Merope; and on my brow
God, at the giving of the silver worlds,
Laying His hand, left splendour. None of all,
Sisters! not one of all your gleaming band,
Wore whiter glory, or stood nearer Him.
First of the seven lights I came and went,
And unto me Electra bent her beams,
And Maia bowed her brightness—and ye three,
Alcyone, Celæno, Taygetë,
And silver Sterope, next me in place,
Took fire from me, and tended me with love.
I was a perfect Angel of pure ray,

Chosen a chief of Planets. Woe is me!
I am a wildered World in well-known paths,
For I am Merope,—rash Merope,—
She that was great in Heaven become the least,
Standing between God's lowest and God's love.

O Sisters! lead me with the sound of song,
Sweep solemn music forth from balanced wings,
And leave it cloudlike in the fluttered sky,
That I may feel and follow. Ah! my light,
My vanished lovely light! I sate in place
With wakeful eyes, and kept the earth in ken;
And ye around me waited for my word.
Far down below the cone of shadow crept
Whereunder lay Earth's night, and from its gloom
Prayers, and the sound of tears, and other sounds
Which unto angel ears are strange, came up
Like smoke from peaked volcano, and our vans
Fanned them fresh breath to take them on to God.
Sisters! amid the myriad cries that rose
From lips that Night's nepenthe could not calm,
Came a long prayer for mercy, growing loud
As it waxed hopeless;—she who uttered it,
A sad, stained woman, with a fair fierce cheek,

Kneeling beside the black rim of a river,
The rim of a black river, surging forth
From a great city's glare into the gloom.
I saw her—and ye saw her, Sisters mine,
Plucking the mother's bosom from her babe
Ere the waves took them—one, starved dead of love,
And one of life—both crying one heart-cry
That asked God's pity in pain's common tongue;
And ye said, "Sister, let it go above;"
But I, who, knowing all things, knew her sin,
And what deed stained the raiment of her soul,
Answered, "It goeth not, her grief is just;"
And struck it down the sky. Woe! woe! her cry
Fell, and then rose, and grew up from a groan
Into a voice,—a voice that struck the Stars
And bounded from their brilliant capes, and rolled
Louder than thundering crash of orb on orb,
Thrilling the Planets, till each Angel knew
The very voice of God, saying, "Thou Star!
Thou, Merope! go earthward." Ah, my light!
O Sisters, lead my world on while I weep,
For I am Merope,—blind Merope, . . .

Merope,—light-abandoned Merope,
Who heard unmoved God's lowest ask His love.

List no more, holy Sisters, list no more!
Bar the white porch of each unshamèd ear
With double-folded wing, for I must speak
Of things that enter not at that high gate,—
The mournful matter of a mortal life,
Whereto I went,—hence,—but I know not how!
Fairer are homes of heaven, yet very fair
Thy fields and fountains were, my prison-house!
Caverns and woods, valleys and veiny brooks;
And thou, too, mountain-cradled Indian stream!
By whose green brim my feet new from the clouds
Touched the hard earth, and stood: in whose great towns
My spirit breathed harsh air of earth,—and lived:
Within the temple of that country's God
Amid the Indian maids I moved as one,
And took the manner of their race and tongue,
And wore their vest and veil, and bore the name
An earthly father gave, and called his boy
A gentle human boy, loving and brave,
My brother!—Oh, woe! woe! light me along!

For I am Merope,—shamed Merope,
She that was made God's lowest on the earth,
Standing between God's lowest and His love.

O Stars!—I say not Sisters, saying this,—
War rose in that our home, spears fringed the walls.
Where corn bristled before; an old fierce king
Sought us for slaves, and men laid down their lives
That others might live free. My brother fought
A-front in all the battles, for these hands
Buckled the steel which kept his heart from harm,
And fed his quiver. Sinless human love
Touched me; and on the battlements by night,
Gazing unknowingly upon mine own,
I charged Star-Angels to shine fair for him,
And send him favouring beams. At such a time
The captain of the chariots of the king,
Watching our wall, cast eyes of earnest love
On me, and lit my soul up with a flame
Wherein all maiden meekness, fear and faith,
Courage to strive and purity to pray,
And the last little wrack of glory lost,
Melted as May snow melts under the sun,

And left a bare bad heart. Oh, hear me not,
High Stars! an evil thing is loveless love,-
Accursed of Heav'n; I knew it, and I fell.
Am I not Merope?—dark Merope,
That Merope whom God's wrath did cast down,
Standing between God's lowest and God's love?

Sisters! lead me along. The Planets pale,
The powers of Heaven are pale to hear in Heaven
The story of my shame. Ai! ai! light on!
I hurry to the ending. Many an eve,—
O silver Worlds, ye saw it!—we did meet,
And drank the burning cup of Passion dry,
Nor slacked the draught, nor stayed, though we might see
The dreggy poison through the purple wine.
Ah, a strong thing is Love! strong as a curse
To drag the soul to woe,—strong as a prayer
To lift it to sweet grace! I swore to him
To yield the city open-gated up
Unto his thirsty swords, for pity went,
And faith, and fair thoughts,—all but headlong love,
At his strong breath. My brother kept the guard
I' the eastern gate: I took him food, and tried

The buckles of his breastplate,—one I loosed,
And drew his battle-knife, and laughingly
Struck on the tempered scales, whereat he smiled,
And bade me strike amain: good sooth! I did,—
Down through the stolen passage past his heart,
So that life left him ere the bright blood came;
Then I flung back the portals, and let in
A sea of stormy helms,—it swept along
One little breath-time: soon a rock-like band
Met it—and stayed—and turned, and scattered it,
Ten to a hundred, fighting for the right,
And speared the backs of the fliers, for all fled
Save one; and him, under my wringing hands,
The savage lances stabbed through greave and groin:
Then mine eyes swam in blood; some angry gripe
Somewhither haled the reeking corse and me
Past howling citizens. Oh, let me end!
Oh! light sad Merope, and let her end!
Merope,—hope-abandoned Merope,
Who stood between God's lowest and God's love!

Ah, sapphire-vested Sisters! ah, crowned Lights!
Bear with my moan a little; I must tell

'How human life did leave me. It was when
The stream whereby we lived did slowly rise
To flood its reeded banks. I, gaining sight,
Waking in fetters by the dark stream-side,
Saw under me the swelling tide, and knew
Cold Death was creeping upward. Oh! I shrieked,
And strained the links that held me to the slime,
And sank soul-stricken on the bloody breast
Of what I loved,—he lay there, and on mine
My child, poor fool! I tore him off, and then,
Mad, bleeding, passion-poisoned, wild with woe,
Kneeling beside the black rim of the river,—
The rim of the black river, surging forth
From the great city's glare into the gloom,
I cried aloud to Heaven. *The cry came back,*
As I had spurned it! Yes, I knew it all!
As I had spurned it, sitting on my Star! .
Yes, yes! I knew it all, and one wild space
God's anger scathed me; then the kind quick waves
Lapped o'er my lip and washed the foul life out;
And then, I know not what,—and then I sat,
Dark on my darkling star. Maker of all!
I do adore Thee, Mighty, Merciful:
Pitying all creatures, Thou didst pity me,

Who pitied not; for I am Merope,—
Ai, ai! Light-bearers, I am Merope,
Merope,—Heaven-exiled Merope,
Who stood between God's lowest and God's love.

1856.

Amadis of Gaul to Don Quixote de la Mancha.

[From the Spanish.]

Thou, who didst imitate the mournful manner
Of my most lonely and despisèd life,
And—leaving joy for suffering and strife—
Upon the bare hillside didst pitch thy banner!
Thou, whose unshamèd eyes with tears oft ran o'er—
Salt, dripping tears!—when, giving up all proper
Vessels of use, silver, and tin, and copper,
Thou atest earth's herbs on the earth,—a woful
dinner!
Rest thou content, Sir Knight! Ever and ever—
Or, at the least, while through the hemispheres
Golden Apollo drives his glittering mares—
Famous and praised shall be thy high endeavour!
Thy land of birth the glory of all nations!
Thy chronicler's, the crown of reputations!

The Shadow of the Cross.

[Suggested by the well-known picture of Mr. Holman Hunt, in which the uplifted form of Christ, resting with extended arms from His labour in the carpenter's shop at Nazareth, throws upon the wall of the Virgin's house a figure of a Cross.]

Light and Shadow! Shadow and Light!
  Twins that were born at the birth of the sun!
One the secret of all things bright;
  The secret of all things sombre, one;

One the joy of the radiant day;
  One the spell of the dolorous night:
One at the dew-fall bearing sway;
  One at the day-break, rosy and white:

Sister and brother, born of one mother,
  Made of a thought of the Infinite One,
Made by the wisdom of God—and none other—
  In times when the times were not begun.

One with the morning-star for its gem,
  Glad Eösphorus, herald of beams;
One that wears for its diadem
  Pale, sad Hesperus, planet of dreams.

One for the glory and one for the gloom;
  One to show forth and one to shroud;
One for the birth and one for the tomb;
  One for the clear sky and one for the cloud.

Sister and brother, for ever and ever,
  Nowise disparted, and nowhere a-twain;
Mysteries no man's thinking shall sever;
  Marvels none can miss, or explain.

Light, which without a shadow shines not!
  Shadow, which shows not unless by light!
(For that which we see to sight combines not,
  Except by the sides that escape the sight.)

Is this the parable? this the ending?
  That nothing lives for us unless with a foil;
That all things show by contrast and blending,—
  Pleasure by Pain, and Rest by Toil?

Strength by Weakness, and Gladness by Sorrow
  Hope by Despair, and Peace by Strife;
The Good by the Evil, the Day by the Morrow;
  Love by Hatred, and Death by Life?

Ah! then I hate you, Shadow! Shadow!
  Ghost and ghoul of the glittering Light!
If the gold of wisdom, the El Dorado
  Of Art must be had in this sorrowful sight.

Shadow! we know how lovely and tender
  Are the deeds you do with your witchcraft dim;
What wonderful sorcery tempers the splendour
  Of light, in your sisterly play with him!

We know what rose-leaf lips would be cold
  Without the soft finish of warm half-light;
We know what tresses would lose their gold
  If you did not gloss it and gild it aright.

We know how weary the dawns would go
  Lacking the promise of placid eves;
We know how fiercely the hours could glow
  Without the cool green dusk under the leaves;

Yes! and we know how joy would tire,
And gladness turn madness, and life be undone;
And strength prove weakness, and Hope expire,
And Love droop wingless, if change were none.

And, Holiest Shadow of God's great hand!—
That makest the sleep and the spangled night,—
I know that by Thee we understand
The stars which in silver His glories write.

And we seem to see that, to eyes like ours,
Dawn by Dusk must usher its state;
That hearts win hope from the darkest hours,
And Love kisses best with a shudder at Hate.

But, Shadow! Shadow! Ghost of the Light!
Be Sadness! be Softness! be solemn Gloom!
Be Death! be Doubt! be the secret of Night!
Be the spell of Beauty! but past the tomb

Thou wendest not with us, accursed Shadow!
That makest a fable of all real things:—
The gold of wisdom, the El Dorado
Of art, a happier musing brings.

Far off—worlds off—in the Pleiads seven
  Is a Star of the Stars—Alcyonë—
The orb which moves never in all the Heaven,
  The centre of all sweet Light we see.

And there, thou Shadow of Earth's pale seeming!
  The wisest say no shadow can be,
But perfect splendours, lucidly streaming,
  And Life and Light at intensity.

Then why did the artist show it thus—
  The Sorrow of Sorrows personified—
Painting the carpenter's Son for us
  And the Shadow behind of the Crucified?

Meek and sweet in the sun He stands,
  Drinking the air of His Syrian skies;
Lifting to Heaven toil-wearied hands,
  Seeing "His Father" with those mild eyes;

Gazing from trestle and bench and saw,
  To the Kingdom kept for His rule above.
O Christ, the Lord! we see with awe!
  Ah! Joseph's son! we look with love!

Ah! Mary Mother! we watch with moans
  Marking that phantom thy sweet eyes see,
That hateful *Shadow* upon the stones,
  That sign of a coming agony!

Did it happen so once in Nazareth?
  Did a Christmas sun show such a sight,
Making from Life a spectre of Death,
  Mocking our "Light of the World" with Light?

He tells us—this artist—one Christmas-tide,
  The sunset painted that ominous Cross;
The shadows of evening prophesied
  The hyssop to Him, and to us the loss.

For, her pang is the pang of us, every one:
  Wherever the Light shines the Shadow is;
Where beams a smile must be heard a moan;
  The anguish follows the flying bliss.

Yon crown which the Magi brought to her,
  It makes a vision of brows that bleed;
Yon censer of spikenard and balm and myrrh,
  It looks on the wall like a "sponge and reed."

And, therefore, long ago was it written—
Of a Christmas to come in the realms of Light—
"The curse shall depart and death shall be smitten,
And then *there shall be no more night.*"

O Christ, our Lord, in that Shadowless Land,
Be mindful of these sad shadows which lie!
Look forth and mark what a woful band
Of glooms attend us across Thy sky!

"Christmas!" and hear what wars and woe!
"Christmas!" and see what grief o'er all!
Lord Christ! our suns shine out to show
Crosses and thorns on Time's old wall!

So, if Thou art where that star gleams,
Alcyonë, or higher still,
Send down one blessed ray which beams
Free of all shadows—for they kill!

187[illegible]

Christ Blessing Little Children.

[Suggested by the picture of Rembrandt in the National Gallery.]

MASTER, well done! thy sombre colours stoop,
  As what they paint did, to the root of things!
Thy Christ hath eyes, whose weary glances droop,
  Marred with much love, and all the ache it brings:
Thy children—soft, albeit, their Syrian grace—
  Clasp sunburnt breasts, and drink of milk that cost
Sweat to provide it; from each mother's face
  Is gone the bridal beauty; lapsed and lost
Bliss from these bondsmen; yet, how the Divine
  Breaks through the clay! how Truth's gold gilds the story!
How longing for heaven's light makes earth's gloom shine!
  How lovely, at its lowest, is love's glory!
We see Him as He sate in Palestine.

Lord Christ! these are the little ones that come!
Thou spakest, "Suffer them;" yea, Thou didst say,
"Forbid them not, for in my kingdom some
Are like to such!" O Lord! do Angels lay
Small aching heads on sorrow-laden bosoms?
Do Thy young angels toil, and starve, and weep?
Hardly for these will ope life's morning blossoms
Before their days bring griefs, their nightly sleep
Dreams of the Roman whip. Ah, Master Mild!
Be some great secret of Thy kingdom said
To keep the grown man glad as this male child,
The woman pure as is that tender maid!
They "see Thy Father's face!" Then, how beguiled?

Little sweet sister, standing at His knee!
Small peasant sister! sucking at thy thumb,
Touched to that tiny heart with the mystery,
Glad to be brought, but far too shy to come;
Yes! tremble, but steal closer; let it cover
All of thy head, that potent, piteous hand;
And, mothers! reach your round-eyed babies over
To take their turn, nought though they under-
stand;
For these thereby are safe, being so kissed

By that Love's lips which kisses out of heaven;
And we, with little children, but no Christ,
Press near; perchance the blessing may be given
From theirs to ours, though we His face have missed.

1872.

On a Cyclamen,

PLUCKED AT CANA OF GALILEE, AND PRESENTED TO A BRIDE.



ONLY a Flower! but, Dear! it grew
On the green mountains which en-ring
Kana-el-Jelîl; looking to
The village, and the little Spring!

The Love which did those bridals bless
Ever and ever on you shine!
Make happier all your happiness,
And turn its water into wine!

The Twelve Months.



JANUARY.

RAIN—hail—sleet—snow!—Yet, in my East,
This is the time when palm-trees quicken
With flowers, wherefrom the Arabs' feast
Of amber dates will thenceforth thicken.

Palms,—he and she,—in sight they grow;
And o'er the desert-sands is wafted,
On light airs of the After-glow,
That golden dust whence fruit is grafted.

Ah, happy trees! who feel no frost
Of winter-time, to chill your gladness;
And grow not close enough for cost
Of bliss fulfilled, which heightens sadness;

No gray reality's alloy
  Your green ideal can diminish!
You have love's kiss, in all its joy,
  Without love's lips, which let it finish!

FEBRUARY.

Fair Grecian legend, that, in Spring,
  Seeking sweet tale for sunnier hours,
Fabled how Enna's queen did bring
  Back from the underworld her flowers!

Whence come ye else, goblets of gold,
  Which men the yellow crocus call?
You snow-drops, maiden-meek and cold,
  What other fingers let you fall?

What hand but hers, who, wont to rove
  The asphodel in Himera,
Torn thence by an ungentle love,
  Flung not her favourites away?

King of dark death! on thoughts that roam
  Thy passion and thy power were spent:

When blossom-time is due at home,
  Homeward the soul's strong wings are bent.

So comes she, with her pleasant wont,
  When Spring-time chases Winter cold,
Couching against his frozen front
  Her tiny spears of green and gold.

MARCH.

Welcome, North-wind! from the Norland;
Strike upon our foremost foreland,
Sweep away across the moorland,
        Do thy lusty kind!
Thou and we were born together
In the black Norwegian weather;
Birds we be of one brave feather,
        Welcome, bully wind!

Buss us! set our girls' cheeks glowing;
Southern blood asks sun for flowing,
North blood warms when winds are blowing,
        Most of all winds, thou;

There's a sea-smack in thy kisses
Better than all breezy blisses,
So we know, our kinsman this is:
Buss us! cheek and brow.

Rollick out thy wild sea-catches,
Roar thy stormy mad sea-snatches,
What bare masts and battened hatches
Thou hast left behind;
Ring it, till our ears shall ring, too,
How thou mad'st the Frenchman bring-to:
That's the music Northmen sing to,
Burly brother wind!

Go! with train of spray and sea-bird,
Fling the milky waves to leeward,
Drive the ragged rain-clouds seaward,
Chase the scudding ships;
To the South-wind take our greeting,
Bid him bring the Spring—his Sweeting—
Say what glad hearts wait her meeting,
What bright eyes and lips.

APRIL.

Blossom of the almond-trees,
April's gift to April's bees,
Birthday ornament of spring,
Flora's fairest daughterling!—
Coming when no flow'rets dare
Trust the cruel outer air;
When the royal king-cup bold
Will not don his coat of gold;
And the sturdy blackthorn spray
Keeps its silver for the May;—
Coming when no flow'rets would,
Save thy lowly sisterhood
Early violets, blue and white,
Dying for their love of light.
Almond blossom, sent to teach us
That the spring-days soon will reach us,
Lest, with longing over-tried,
We die as the violets died.
Blossom, clouding all the tree
With thy crimson 'broidery,
Long before a leaf of green
On the bravest bough is seen;

Ah! when wintry winds are swinging
All thy red bells into ringing,
With a bee in every bell,
Almond bloom, we greet thee well!

MAY.

Who cares on the land to stay,
Wasting the wealth of a day?
    The fallow fields leave
    For the meadows that heave,
And away to the sea—away!

To the meadows far out on the deep,
Whose ploughs are the winds that sweep
    The green furrows high,
    When into the sky
The silvery foam-bells leap.

At sea!—my bark—at sea!
With the winds, and the wild clouds and me;
    The low shore soon
    Will be down with the moon,
And none on the waves but we!

Thy wings are abroad, my bird!
And the sound of their speed is heard;
    The scud flieth west,
    And the gull to her nest,
But they lag far behind us, my bird!

White as my true love's neck
Are the sails that shadow thy deck;
    And thine image wan,
    Like the stream-mirrored swan,
Lies dim on thy dancing track.

On! on! with a swoop and a swirl,
High over the clear waves' curl;
    Under thy prow,
    Like a fairy, now,
Make the blue water bubble with pearl

Lo! yonder, my lady, the light!
'Tis the last of the land in sight!
    Look once—and away!
    Bows down in the spray;
Lighted on, by the lamps of the night!

JUNE.

Lily of June, pearl-petalled, emerald-leaved!
  A sceptre thou, a silver-studded wand
By lusty June, the Lord of Summer, waved,
  To give to blade and bud his high command.

Nay! not a sceptre, but a seated Bride,
  The white Sultana of a world of flowers,
Chosen, o'er all their passion and their pride,
  To reign with June, Lady of azure hours.

Ah, Vestal-bosomed! Thou that, all the May,
  From maidenly reserve wouldst not depart,
Till June's warm wooing won thee to display
  The golden secret hidden at thy heart:

Lay thy white heart bare to the Summer King!
  Brim thy broad chalice for him with fresh rain!
Fling to him from thy milky censers, fling
  Fine fragrances, a Bride without a stain!

Without?—look, June! thy pearly love is smutched!
  That which did wake her gentle beauty, slays;

Alas! that nothing lovely lasts, if touched
  By aught more earnest than a longing gaze.

JULY.

Proud, on the bosom of the river,
  White-winged the vessels come and go,
Dropping down, with ingots to deliver,
  Drifting up stately on the flow.
Mirrored in the sparkling waters under,
  Mightily rising to the sky,
Kings of the sunshine and the thunder,
  Come they and go they, in July.

Quiet, in the reaches of the river,
  Blooms the sea-poppy all alone;
Hidden by the marshy sedges ever,
  Who knows its golden cup is blown?
Who cares if far-distant billows,
  Rocking the great ships to sea,
Underneath the tassels of the willows
  Rocks the sea-poppy and the bee?

Rocks the marsh-blossom with its burden,
  Only a worker bee at most!

Working for nothing but the guerdon
  To live on its honey in the frost.
The outward-bound ye watch, and the incomer;
  The bee and the blossom none espy!
But these have their portion in the summer,
  In the glad, gold sunshine of July.

AUGUST.

[From the German.]

Once, with a landlord wondrous fine,
  A weary guest, I tarried;
A golden pippin was his sign,
  Upon a green branch carried!

Mine host—he was an apple-tree
  With whom I took my leisure;
Fair fruit, and mellowed juicily,
  He gave me from his treasure.

There came to that same hostel gay
  Bright guests, in brave adorning;
A merry feast they made all day,
  And sang, and slept till morning.

I, too, to rest my body laid
  On bed of crimson clover;
The landlord with his own broad shade
  Carefully spread me over.

I rose;—I called to pay the score,
  But "No!" he grandly boweth;
Now, root and fruit, for evermore
  God bless him, while he groweth!

SEPTEMBER.

The harvest-moon stands on the sea,
  Her golden rim's adrip;
She lights the sheaves on many a lea,
  The sails on many a ship;
Glitter, sweet Queen! upon the spray,
  And glimmer on the heather;
Right fair thy ray to gild the way
  Where lovers walk together.

The red wheat rustles, and the vines
  Are purple to the foot;
And true-love, waiting patient, wins
  Its blessed time of fruit:

Lamp of all lovers, Lady-moon!
  Light these ripe lips together
Which reap alone a harvest sown
  Long ere September weather.

OCTOBER.

A bold brunette she is, radiant with mirth,
  Who comes a-tripping over corn-fields cropped;
  Fruits and blown roses, from her full arms dropped,
Carpet her feet along the gladdened earth;

Around her brow glitters a careless crown
  Of bronzèd oak, and apple-leaves, and vine;
  And russet-nuts and country berries twine
About her gleaming shoulders and loose gown.

Like grapes at vintage, where the ripe wine glows,
  Glows so her sweet cheek, summer-touched but fair;
  And, like grape-tendrils, all her wealth of hair,
Gold on a ground of brown, nods as she goes:

"Grapes too, a-spirt, her brimming fingers bear,
A dainty winepress, pouring wet and warm
The crimson river over wrist and arm,
And on her lips—adding no crimson there!"

Ah! golden autumn hours—fly not so fast!
Let the sweet Lady long with us delay;
The sunset makes the sun so wished-for,—stay!
Of three fair sisters—loveliest and the last!

But after laughter ever follows grief,
And Pleasure's sunshine brings its shadow Pain;
Even now begins the dreary time again,
The first dull patter of the first dead leaf.

NOVEMBER.

Come! in thy veil of ashen cloud
With mists around thee, like a shroud,
And wan face coloured with no light
Of sun or moon, by day or night;
I would not see thee glad and gay,
Dark month! that called my Love away!

I would not see thee otherwise,
Gray month! that hast the dying eyes;
Cold month! that com'st with icy hands
Chaining the waters and the lands!
So didst thou chill two hearts at play,
Dark month! that called my Love away!

And yet, I know, behind thy mists
The bright Sun shines, Love's star subsists!
If we could lift thy veil, may be,
Thy hidden face were good to see!
Come as thou wilt—I say not nay,
Dark month! that called my Love away!

November 1865.

DECEMBER.

In fret-work of frost and spangle of snow
Unto his end the year doth wend;
And sadly for some the days did go,
And glad for some were beginning and end!
But—sad or glad—grieve not for his death,
Mournfully counting your measures of breath,
You, that, before the stars began,

Were seed of woman and promise of man,
You who are older than Aldebaran!
It was but a ring round about the Sun,
One passing dance of the planets done;
One step of the Infinite Minuet
Which the great worlds pace, to a music set
By Life immortal and Love divine;
Whereof is struck, in your threescore and ten,
One chord of the harmony, fair and fine,
Of that which maketh us women and men!
In fret-work of frost and spangle of snow,
Sad or glad—let the old year go!

In Westminster Abbey.

SHE.

UNDER the marble's milk-white satin,
With cherubim, seraphim, trumpets of Fame,
And stately scrolls of imperial Latin
Blazoning proudly each deathless name;

I think I could rest in a well-pleased slumber;
I think my flesh would be fain of the grave
If I might be of this glorified number,
And such a tomb, such epitaphs, have!

HE.

Oh, easily lulled! and comforted lightly!
If I might choose, I would have them give
To the quick flames, burning clear and brightly,
Whatever is left of me, after I live.

Or else, in the kind great arms of the sea—
  Which nothing can cumber, and nothing stain—
Lay it and leave it. So might I be
  Safe back with the winds and the waters again!

SHE.

At least confess 'twere a record splendid
  To lie, like Philips, with lovely verse
Sounding the triumph of life well ended,
  Tenderly wreathing the minstrel's hearse;

Was it not grand to win such sweet riddance?
  "Master! peaceful hereunder recline!"
To be laid in earth with that gentle biddance?
  "Till Angels wake thee with songs like thine!"

HE.

Fair is the verse; but, I think the Master
  Would rather live on a choral lip;
Would liever some warm heart beat the faster
  For musical joy and fellowship,

In anthems rolling—solemn and certain—
  Or madrigals left us to play and to sing;
Than have Angels set to draw Death's curtain,
  And lauds as loud as the praise of a King.

SHE.

Well! tell me then, was there ever graven
  A farewell softer to spirit fled
Than Franklin hears in this quiet haven
  Where moor the fleets of our mighty Dead?

Cenotaph? Yes!—but the beautiful message!
  Where is one like it? "Great Sailor-Soul!
Sailing now on some happier passage,
  Voyaging hence to no earthly Pole!"

HE.

Nay! I have seen what was like it, and better;
  Far away, on a Syrian hill:
Not one word! not an Arabic letter
  Marked where the dead man lay so still;

But round his headstone, for sorrow and story,
A long black braid of tresses was tied!
Think how she loved him to give the glory
Of her hair! Would you, Dear! if I had died?

Atalanta.



Greek Atalanta! girdled high,
Gold-sandalled; great majestic Maid!
Her hair bound back with silver tie,
And in her hand th' Arcadian blade
To pierce that suitor who shall choose
Challenge her to the Race—and lose!

And—at her side—Hippomenes!
Poised on his foremost foot, with eyes
Burning to win—if Pallas please,—
That course deep-perilous whose prize
Is joy or death! Apples of gold
His trembling fingers do enfold!

Oh, girls! 'tis English, as 'tis Greek!
Life is that course: train so the soul

That, girt with health and strength, it seek
One swifter still, who touches goal
First—or, for lack of breath outdone,
Dies gladly, so such race was run!

Yet, scorn not, if, before your feet
The golden fruits of life should roll—
Faith, worship, loving service sweet—
To stoop and grasp them! So the Soul
Runs slower in the Race by these,
But wins them, and—Hippomenes.

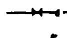
Life.

[From Victor Hugo.]



Let us be like the bird, one instant lighted
Upon a twig that swings;
He feels it yield—but sings on, unaffrighted,
Knowing he hath his wings!

Hadrian's Address to his Soul.



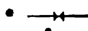
SOUL of me! floating, and flitting, and fond!
Thou and this body were life-mates together;
Wilt thou be gone now? And whither?
  Pallid, and naked, and cold,
Not to laugh, or be glad, as of old!

The Depths of the Sea.

[On a picture by Mr. Burne Jones, with the motto :

—habes quod totâ mente petisti

Infelix !]



WHICH is the one we must pity, Master ?
  Who is *infelix*—the boy, or she
Drawing him down from his barque's disaster
  To the pebbled floor of her silvery sea ?
With light keen laughter drawing him down,
Gleeful to clasp him—her mariner brown—
Heedless of life-breath, which bubbles upward,
  So the fair strong body her own may be.

Who was the one that longed too madly
  To have the wish—and is sorry to have ?
Do you mean your sailor faced over-gladly
  The toils of the bitter and treacherous wave ;

The depths which charm, the danger which pleases,
The death that tempts man's spirit, and teases;
And now he has won it, his prize of daring,
Dragged to the cold sea-maiden's cave?

Or was it she, the Merman's Daughter,—
Half soft white woman, half glittering scales—
Who, sporting by starlight upon the water,
Saw him, and passioned—and so prevails;
Sent the gale, or the mountainous billow,
To wash him down to the oozy pillow
Where, night and day, she will lull her lover,
'Mid whispering sea-shells, and green sea-dales?

And she is to find—poor Child of ocean,
His mouth set fast, and his blue eyes dim;
And lips, and limbs, and hands *sans* motion,
And sweet love dumb in the breast of him;
And her own wild heart will break to know
Men cannot breathe in her Blue below,
Nor mermaidens come to the Blue of his Heaven;
Is that your moral, my Painter grim?

Say, rather: "*terque quaterque felices!*"
  Fortunate, both of them, winning their will!
If you paint the deep grey Sea's abysses
  Dare also to plunge to the depths of Ill!
For Peace broods under the rough waves' riot,
And beyond dark Death is delightful quiet;
And once to have loved is good for the Sea-girl,
  And once to have died is better still!

I call them happy—yea, "three and more times,"
  She hath her Boy; he hath his rest;
And to finish love and life beforetimes
  For Sailor and Mermaid is—may be—best:
I think she feels, by her subtle laughter,
That to clasp him was good, whatever comes after;
And what should a weary mariner wish for
  Better than sleep by Love caressed?

The Heavenly Secret.

"SOMETIMES," sighed Lalagë, "in hours of sadness,
  A sudden pleasure shines upon the soul,
The heart beats quick to half-heard notes of gladness,
  And from the dark mind all its clouds unroll:
How is this, Poet? You, who know things hidden!
  Whence sounds that under-song of soft content?
What brings such peace, unlooked-for and unbidden?
  Say, now! Oh, is it truth or accident?"

"Dear Maid," I said! "wisely you ask a poet,
  For there's my answer, on your upper lip:
The Talmud writes: that dimple—as you show it—
  Between the rosy mouth and nose's tip,
Was stamped by God's own hand, the day He made us,
  When unto each He whispered "All goeth well!"
But pressed His finger on our lips, and laid us
  Under His secret not to know—nor tell!

An Adieu.

INDIA farewell! I shall not see again
Thy shining shores, thy peoples of the Sun
Gentle, soft-mannered, by a kind word won
To such quick kindness! O'er the Arab main
Our flying flag streams back; and backwards stream
My thoughts to those fair open fields I love,
City and village, maidan, jungle, grove,
The temples and the rivers! Must it seem
Too great for one man's heart to say it holds
So many many Indian sisters dear,
So many Indian brothers? that it folds
Lakhs of true friends in parting? Nay! but there
Lingers my heart, leave-taking: and it roves
From hut to hut whispering "he knows, and loves!"
Good-bye! Good-night! Sweet may your slumbers be,
Gunga! and Kaśi! and Sarâswati!

March 5, 1886,
S.S. Siam.

Jeanne.

[From Victor Hugo.]



JEANNE, in the dark room, had dry bread for dinner,
Guilty of something wrong; and I—the sinner—
Crept up to see that prisoner in her cell,
And slipped—on the sly—some comfits to her. Well!
Against the laws, I own! Those, who with me
Support the order of society,
Were furious! Vainly murmured little Jeanne,
"Indeed, indeed, I never will again
Rub my nose with my thumb! I won't make pussy
Scratch me!" they only cried, "The naughty hussy!
She knows how weak you are, and wanting sense,
And sees you only laugh at grave offence:
Government is not possible! All day
Order is troubled, influence slips away,

No rules, no regulations! nought can mend her;
You ruin everything!" Then I—the offender—
I hang my head, and say, "There's no excuse!
I know I err; I know by such abuse,
Such wrong indulgence, nations 'go to pot;'
Put me upon dry bread!" "Why should we not?
We will! you merit it!" But my small maid
From her dark corner looking unafraid
With eyes divine to see, full of a sense
Of settled justice, in their innocence,
Whispered, for me to hear, "Well, if they do,
I shall bring comfits, Grandpapa, to you."

A Farewell.

[From the French.]

To four-score years my years have come;
At such an age to shuffle home
  Full time it seems to be:
So now, without regret, I go,
Gaily my packing-up I do;
  Bonsoir, la Compagnie!

When no more in this world I dwell
Where I shall live I can't quite tell;
  Dear God! be that with Thee!
Thou wilt ordain nothing save right,
Why should I feel then grief or fright?
  Bonsoir, la Compagnie!

Of pleasant days I had my share;
For love and fame no more I care;
  Good sooth, they weary me!
A gentleman, when fit for nought,
Takes leave politely, as he ought:
  Bonsoir, la Compagnie!

A Love-Song of Henri Quatre.



COME, rosy Day!
Come quick—I pray—
I am so glad when I thee see!
Because my Fair,
Who is so dear,
Is rosy-red and white like thee.

She lives, I think
On heavenly drink
Dawn-dew, which Hebe pours for her;
Else—when I sip
At her soft lip
How smells it of ambrosia?

She is so fair
None can compare;
And, oh, her slender waist divine!

Her sparkling eyes
Set in the skies
The morning stars would far outshine!

Only to hear
Her voice so clear
The village gathers in the street;
And Tityrus,
Grown one of us,
Leaves piping on his flute so sweet.

The Graces three,
Where'er she be,
Call all the Loves to flutter nigh;
And what she'll say,—
Speak when she may,—
Is full of sense and majesty

In Memory of S. S.,

ÆTAT. 21,

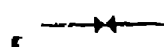
(Who was accidentally drowned in Loch Maree, Scotland, on the 29th of August 1887).



Too dear to die! too sweet to live, and bear
The griefs which burden all our being here
Too precious to give up, could Love but stay
The stroke of Fate, and parting pangs delay!
Yet take her—since 'tis willed—Angels of Heav'n!
Your Sister-Angel, her so briefly given
To grace and gladden Earth. Ah, wild Scotch Lake!
We will not curse thee, for her gentle sake;
Ah! cruel Water-Nymphs! who drew her in,
We half forgive, she was so fair to win!
Ah, Rocks and Rowan-trees, who saw her die,
And could not save her! we shall, by and by,
Know the hard secret of a woe like this,

And see—clear-eyed—how Sorrow brings to Bliss.
To-day there comes no comfort! None! We wave
Weak hands towards that gloom beyond the grave;
We speed vain messages of tender thought
To that new-vanished Spirit; who saith nought!
Still, she must know! must hear! must yearn to say
All's well with her; that Love and Death, alway,
Are friends; and last pains light, and swift to heal;
And the Loch's winding-sheet not cold to feel!
She speaks! with higher life made glad and full;
Our ears for Angels' whispers are too dull!
Have, then, thy early peace, Sophie! and we—
By this trust lightened—Love's blind agony.

Epitaph written for the Same.



Dear Maid! the waters, closing o'er thy head,
Snatched thee from Earth, but opened Heaven, instead:
Sadly we give thee back to God That gave,
In this faith firm—that He, who walked the wave,
Held thy Soul up, when thy sweet Body sank;
And led thee, loving, to the Blissful Bank.
Pray for us, new-made Angel!—now, that we
Sink not beneath the waves of Sorrow's Sea.

Obscure Martyrs

"The world knows nothing of its greatest men."

THEY have no place in storied page,
No rest in marble shrine;
They are past and gone with their by-gone age,
They died, and "made no sign:"
But work that shall find its wages yet,
And deeds that their world shall not forget,
Done for the Love Divine—
There were their triumphs and these shall be
The crowns of their immortality.

Ah! seek them not where sleep the Dead,
Ye may not find their trace:
No graven stone is on their bed,
No flowers their slumber grace;

But wild and unknown is their silent grave,
It may be the woods, or the cold sea-wave
Or a lonely desert-place:
For they needed no prayers, and no mourning-bell,
Their tomb is the Earth that they served so well.

They healed sick hearts till theirs were broken,
And dried sad eyes till theirs lost light;
We shall know at last by a certain token
How they fought, and fell in the fight;
Salt tears of sorrow unbeheld,
Passionate toils unchronicled
And silent strifes for right—
Angels shall count them and Earth shall sigh,
That she left her best children to battle and die!

1852

Wilfred H. Arnold.

THE first-born of thy first-born, gentle Kate!
Comes—as we call it "dead," to thee called "dead"
—Oh happy living Angel!—that his bed
May be by thine. Open for him the gate
Of Home beyond; spread wide thy loving arms
To take him—flying upon new-fledged wings—
Safe to thy breast: and—when, with tenderest things
And soft celestial soothings, Earth's alarms
Cease, and his mother's tears dry on his brow—
Teach our sweet babe the way the Angels kiss,
And where God dwells, and all the holy bliss
Of the unseen Light; and, ask in Heaven thou
That there may come a Presence from above
To comfort those who send thee what they love.

1886.

The Rhine and the Moselle.



As the glory of the Sun,
When the dismal night is done,
Leaps upward in the summer blue to shine,
So gloriously flows
From his cradle in the snows
The King of all the River-floods—the Rhine!

As a mailed and sceptred King
Sweeps onward triumphing,
With waves of helmets flashing in his line;
As a drinker past control
With the red wine on his soul,
So flashes through his Vintages—the Rhine!

As a Lady who would speak
What is written on her cheek,
If her heart would give her tongue the leave to tell!;

Who fears, and follows still,
And dares not trust her will,
So follows all his windings—the Moselle!

Like the silence that is broken
When the wished-for word is spoken,
And the heart hath a home where it may dwell;
Like the sense of sudden bliss,
And the first long loving kiss,
Is the meeting of the Rhine and the Moselle!

Like the two souls that are blended
When the loneliness is ended,
The loneliness each life hath known so well;
Like the sun and moon together
In a sky of splendid weather
Is the marriage of the Rhine and the Moselle!

July 1853.

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